

Poor Boy's Tale



**an autobiography by Alan Woodward,
in two volumes ; one, the first sixty years**

For my mother and father who made me what I am.

Gerrard Winstanley, " *Law of Freedom* ", 1652 :

" Everyone talks of freedom, but there are but few that act for freedom, and the actors for freedom are oppressed by the talkers and verbal professors of freedom "

Anarchist "leader" Buenaventura Durruti, when a North American reporter commented to him that even if the workers did win in the Spanish Revolution 1936-39 , all they would get was a pile of ruins, he replied -

"We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a while . For, you must not forget , we can also build these palaces and cities here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers, we can build others to take their place. And better ones. We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin the world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here in our hearts, and that world is growing this very minute "

from Abel Paz (Diego Comacho) : *Durruti - the people armed*

Thanks for help in making this book to Terry Woodward, Jo Turner and Peter Woodward, Pat and Debra Denton, Pam Morris, and Sarah Grimwood

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Introduction, some dates and Guidance to reading

Autobiographies are personal histories - facts, responses, etc , that would otherwise be lost to obscurity, apart from a few memories. Of course 'important people' have always had access to publication and some of them have seemed to imagine they are re-writing history, but we ordinary folk know we that are just writing personal histories for a few family members and associates .

So this is the story up to my retirement, a large enough volume and there will be a small concluding, but I hope not final , volume in 2012 . Most of the information has been collected from my miscellaneous note books and documents, and memory, and some from journals , all of it written up from a personal point of view. The chronology ends around 1998, Some saved documents are still unexamined, so more writing may follow in volume 2 , along with my more recent history.

The book follows the standard pattern - details of my family and early life in the two parts of the first chapter which is long with personal interviews , research by cousins and collections of photos from all round, This chapter looks at my life up to the age of 18 in 1957, other pieces of information are sprinkled in the following chapters but the section near the end, in chapter 12 has the other pages for personal details ..

The next three chapters look at activities in South Paddington, Islington , Tottenham and then Coventry. These include political accounts of myself, my ,friends , etc, in the Labour Party Young Socialists, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament , the International Socialists and various industrial bodies. Some readers may find these paragraphs abit over whelming but I think the details should be recorded , however people may want to skip these sections.

The style of the book changes from the late 1970s. Henceforth , each chapter looks at a subject - internationalism, strikes , reading, and so on . They may interest the general reader or people with a special concern. The paragraphs below give specific information as to themes .

The last chapter looks at my political beliefs . My early marxism was now fading fast as the International Socialists , now Socialist Workers Party, made what seemed to me a series of catastrophic errors. I tried to raise these issues as I had done for a few decades then re-thought out my beliefs , tying together already known facts to a general belief in libertarianism , specifically old style workers council communism as it broke

with leninism in 1920 with Hermann Gorter and Anton Pannekoek. The book ends on this note. Volume two takes up the issue.

So those washing for selective reading can follow this schedule :

- ❑ Personal life , lifestyle, chapters 1 and 12
- ❑ Political activity and organisations in South Paddington, Islington , Tottenham and Coventry, chapters 2 to 6 ;
- ❑ Industrial activity , the same chapters but specifically chapter 10 for strikes;
- ❑ Trade union education, health safety and welfare at work , is in chapters 8 and 9 ;
- ❑ Internationalism, racism and the problematic of national liberation, chapter 7
- ❑ Revolutionary socialism from marxism to libertarianism, most chapters but especially 2 and 13 ;
- ❑ Reading references, with author, title , date of publication and number of pages , plus any other brief references , before the Index

Of course the years looked at in the book range from the relatively regulated post war years with widespread poverty which affected me and my family especially. My father , a conscientious man, was forced into labouring and driving, and my mother into various part time employments , including making doll's clothes and covering for me on paper rounds and such like. We had moved to Broadstairs in 1948 , such was the London accommodation shortage after 1945 ,but we soon vacated the small terraced house and got a large roomed, ex bookshop for the nuclear family group , including my great granddad, my mum's mum and dad - Nan and Pop - and the immediate family, four kids, etc . I went to school, passed exams then left to live in London eventually . The poverty gradually eased and the rest is history as we say .

Workers

Central to my whole life and this volumes has been the idea of the political role of the working class. I know the working class, I was born into it, grew up in it, have lived and worked in it - I know enough that those who work for a living are easily capable of running the world. They have demonstrated their capacity to make a new world , Paris 1871, Russia 1917, Spain 1936. I remain convinced that the working people will be eventually take over the world , though the circumstances may be quite disastrous as capitalism collapses , as Buenaventura Durruti anticipated . This is the political point .

I hope the present volume will inspire other efforts. Don't forget to record your views ..

Some dates

[Frederick] Alan Woodward born on Sunday 7 May 1939, at the Royal Free Hospital, Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross, London.

The family live in Kentish Town in North London, until evacuated to Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire for the war.

1945 to 1948 back to Kentish Town, with periods back in the country

1948 family move to Broadstairs, then to bigger house , ex bookshop !

1950 school in Ramsgate; left aged 16 , 1956.

1956 to 1957 clerical work in London and Ramsgate

1957 to 1959 National Service

1958 politically active in Labour Party (LP) and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)

1959 to 1961 teacher training college

1961 to 1967 teaching in mainly East London

1961 joined International Socialists group (IS),

1962 got married, son David born

1964 Peter born

1967 to 1972 factory work in Enfield and Tottenham, union rep ; Treasurer then Secretary of Haringey Trades Union Council

1972 to 1974 studying in Enfield and Coventry

1974 moved to Coventry, took up work as Trades Union Studies (TUS) teacher in a Birmingham college at Solihull.

1976-7 split in Coventry IS

1981 separated, set up book shop in north Coventry

1984 moved back to London, commuted to Coventry/Birmingham

1984 to 1985 national miners strike

1986 back to London , unemployed, did supply teaching at Tertherdown.

1987 cancer, more serious than earlier attack in 1982, 10 months of chemotherapy

1987 to 1990 teaching part time TUS in WEA etc

1989 ambulance workers dispute

1990 teaching TUS at Hounslow College

1990 to 1992 Poll tax campaign

1992 became grandfather

1995 SWP finally win key positions in Haringey Trade Union Council, I begin to put out newsletter for HTUC

Also, I start to produce *Fragments* volumes on local workers history ;

1995 Start serious review of my political ideas, soon adopt liberationism.

1997 I retired, began work writing books , autobiography, articles.

In the following years , I investigated, and later participated, in libertarian political activity. I have found this more constructive and is likely to be longer lasting in historical terms.

Chapter One Beginnings and Background

This long chapter covers the years from 1939 up to 1957, in two parts, and gives details of the first period of my life and my family background. It involved big changes and much movement. It takes me to the threshold of my 'intellectual' development as such, and political beliefs.

It is important to look at early life as it often contains clues about future developments. My family lived in Kentish Town, London, NW5, what has been called a *Village in London* [Tindall]. Both my mum and dad came from the area which has its own identity and developed early and steadily until the more rapid changes following the industrial revolution, and in particular the new railway depots of the eighteenth. Since then the theme of working class poverty in this 'rookeries' seems to appear in accounts dating from the last century [Fitzgerald]. The origins of the name go back centuries according to reports. In the pre industrial revolution days, the Ken-ditch or river-ditch town, appears to have been based on the River Fleet which comes down Fleet Road, where I went to school briefly, along Mansfield Road, where I lived, and south through the borough of Camden to the River Thames. For more many years, it has been encased in iron pipes, no danger of flooding, but my Aunt Dolly reports flood water coming up in Mansfield Road in the thirties.

Much of my very early years were spent in the country when we moved out of London mainly to escape the bombs but also in a troop following exercise. I was told at an early age that as a result of the land mine that demolished Gospel Oak School, what would have been my bedroom in Mansfield Road, was severely damaged so perhaps my life was saved by the move to the country. We lived at Milestone Cottage, Haddenham in Buckinghamshire and Well Head Cottage, Therfield near Royston in Hertfordshire, both were detached, thatched roof cottages.

In the country

Of the stay itself, I can recall little. Some experiences wrapping apples in newspaper to save them for the winter months, putting a hot brick from the fire in several newspapers as a bed warmer, carrying the accumulator - a car type battery - to the shop for exchange so that electricity could be used in the house, but not much else. When I visited the two villages some decades later, I was struck by their size. I remembered them as large and extensive but they were in fact tiny - a comment on my view as a 4 year old. They had also been modernised, and gentrified, not much left of the labourer's cottages that I recall now as pretty basic. Haddenham in particular had expanded enormously, as a visit in 2000 revealed.

The return to London after the war is pretty much blank as well. Accommodation was extremely difficult to get - a family on every floor and

eventually and we had to move back to the country. From some old school reports I have learned that I did return to Haddenham in Buckinghamshire in the immediate post war period. I got average reports, readers will not be surprised to learn. However we did go back to London in the end and we lived in Countess Road, NW5, among other places. Other memories include children's activities like smashing the glass fronted fire alarms that were in every street and watching with excitement, from the recesses of the bomb site, the arrival of the fire engine. We also played other childhood games like "knocking dollies out of bed", that is ringing door bells and running away. Most working class families rented one floor of the 3 storey houses in Kentish Town and we got some pleasure from the mild chaos we caused. We lived mainly in the Hampstead Heath borders.

Out of London for now

My mother had some illness that apparently required a move out of London, but I suspect this was partly desperation at the housing, and so we went to Broadstairs in East Kent in even worse conditions. Here I achieved the distinction of being rejected for the Scouts, "full up", and failed the eleven + exam, my only failure in the academic world, but I don't know whether I can blame the exam, the social circumstances of constantly moving, or just a lack of ability.

The situation in our place at Broadstairs was an example of how working class families responded to the acute poverty and the housing shortage. After a brief stay in a tiny terraced house, we moved to an ex book shop out from the centre. Four generations lived in the house, a real extended family. The oldest person was my great grandfather, who was described as a "builder" but had more generally been a shepherd, it seems. He was Henry Piggott and lived to be 93 or thereabouts, dying in 1953. His wife, Granny Piggott who had died about six years previously, was apparently not a well liked person and in the photos it is true that she was not seen smiling. But practically no one talked about her.

The family

It was through the Piggott family's links with the country that we had moved out in war time to Therfield. Next was his daughter, my Nan, Edith. Her husband was known as "Pop", more properly Alf Morris. She had a fairly standard existence apparently, factory work in bottling depots, children, grandchildren and so on. Because my family had lived in with her in London at times, she had a role in our upbringing. With the wisdom that comes with age, she seemed a model of restraint and efficiency. She was really overweight and her best friend had been her husband's sister Lil who was skinny. "Skimmed milk and Nestle's [condensed milk]" was how she self disparagingly described the pair of them.

Pop came from a large family, having brothers John and Fred, and sisters Lil, Lou and Flossie. My Aunt Lou was a jolly person, her married name was Reed, and had Lily and Edie as daughters. Lil, mentioned above, married Harry Wilson and one of their sons Jackie Wilson, married Dolly who lived on both sides of Mansfield Road, including a spell at my Nan's house. There is a well thumbed wedding photo showing that side of the family, including me and my brother Peter, aged six and three respectively. When Jack died in August 2000, Dolly decided to "take him home". She and her two sons took his ashes up to Parliament Hill Fields on Hampstead Heath and threw them to the winds. Her sight is now going and she is moving from Kettering back to Stevenage with her son. She may now be dead ?

Pop had a career in the Army as a cook included a spell in India, though he could only recall words like "nan" and "wallah". After demob, he worked for years in the Prince of Wales Baths - used as a mortuary in the War - but had a side role as an entertainer. There are many photos of him suitably dressed on the coach day trips to the seaside that served as holidays for workers in the days before paid holidays. These were just not part of the conditions of employment. His speciality, I was told, was tap dancing along a pub bar, round the beer glasses, and he seems to have been a ventriloquist. He was a great man for the pub, dressed up in his clown's outfit.

He had one trick which he played regularly on the police, it seems. He would put a big chamber pot in a sack and deliberately skulk about the densely packed estates of North London. The police would spot this suspicious behaviour and detain him. He would create a fuss about being searched and soon a crowd gathered, most of whom were in the know. At length, the constable would delve into the sack and pull out the large chamber pot - to general amusement of all. I wonder how it would go down today ?

He still performed little tricks for us, with his wife as assistant. She would sniff at the right time, or make some other signal, to complement his 'magic'. His main role was to look after the chickens in the garden, then down the pub. The chicken was a real treat at Xmas.

Their daughter was my mother, Edna May Morris. She had two brothers, one died at Sidi Haneish near El Alamein in 1941, that was Arthur Rowland or Roy, or Moggy. I still have some of his letters home. It is a comment on the education system that they look like a 7 year old child's writing.

The other brother, Fred, or Bubbles as he was known from a resemblance to the boy in the Pears Soap advert, lived in North London where I sometimes stayed. He lived in Maitland Park Villas near where Karl Marx

had lived. The house has been demolished some years ago and I only realised subsequently the significance of the address.

After working in London green grocery shops for some years, my uncle became a farm worker and eventually died of occupational brucellosis, caught from mould on animal feed corn. The full impact of that disease is only now being discovered

I paid regular visits as holidays as he and his family travelled round the countryside moving from one job to another, At Eynesford in Kent he was sacked for putting up a *Vote Labour* poster in his window. He married Lily Bonfield and they had two daughters, Daphne and Pamela. The family finally settled near Basingstoke, though there had been some problems with my mum in some dispute over money left by my Nan, I believe. Both Lilly, or Bonnie as she now called herself, and her new partner George died almost simultaneously in 2011, and I thought of psycho-somatic causes.

At this point I am reproducing the text that I had written some years ago, and more recently after the death of the last survivor of the old generation, my Aunt Sue of whom more later. This is a straightforward account of my family history. Looking at my grand parents

Section one, The Narrative

Three of the four families were based originally on three places in Buckinghamshire and then later in North London, especially Wellesley Road, Kentish Town, where at least two of the family members lived at different times. As could have been predicted, the families moved into London in the second half of the 19th century. They were nearly all unskilled workers, one family with the railways, except for the Dixey's who had become shop keepers. Only the Morris's were apparently indigenous to London, living in the borough of Hampstead, later Camden.

One major feature is the occurrence of premature death - that is, below the age of 70. Two early victims were children Daisy and Bertie Woodward who were reported as dying, pre World war 1, from reasons unknown. In the same family Dolly and Alexander died almost simultaneously in the 1920s from lead poisoning and meningitis respectively. Winnie Woodward died from a cancer in 1948, Hodgkin's disease [blood cancer] for which an effective cure has been found, as I can testify. . Ivy Wash, born Atkins, died of another blood cancer, leukaemia, in 1984, aged 56. Harry Jackson had dodgy health and it was a brain tumour that finally got him

Of course, lung cancer from smoking was by far the biggest killer. Fred and Edna Woodward both died aged 66, while Bill and Ray Plaistow went in 1991 and 1995? . . The most catastrophic death was Herbert George

Woodward, aka Bertie, in the great flu epidemic of 1918 - 20. This resulted in three children being put in orphanages - railway or workhouse. At least two woman died from childbirth, or shortly after; Sophia King [b 1816, d .1838] Mary Ann Dixey, born Harney. [Incidentally she may have been related to the famous Chartist leader, George Julian Harney, the records are unclear, see below]. Bubbles [Frederick] Morris died aged 59 from brucellosis, linked to his farm work

Several family members served in the armed forces and at least two died in military action. Arthur Piggott in World War 1, and Arthur Roland, or Roy [Moggy] Morris in WW2. Jimmy Pengelly suffered trauma from his Arnheim experiences and never properly recovered . He died aged 60. On the other hand Janet Piggott lasted until 79 and her husband Henry who went to 91. Nanny Woodward - Atkins - Pile survived to 79 . Bill Woodward was over 90 as was Sue Of course the official records are only that and are clearly far from complete or totally accurate , but they are all we have. Several children recorded in the Census have just disappeared without explanation, so we have to draw our own conclusions about Henry Piggott junior , and John Morris junior. Lastly we should record that modern medicine and standard precautions could have saved most of these. Sue in er account below gives chapter and verse on the health services prior to 1948, and its cash arrangements, and it is ominous that the political parties are now committed to returning the NHS to the private insurance based health management organisations, with all its implications

Where people lived . Three of the families had rural backgrounds fr 1850. Housing was then, and remains now, a major area of social deprivation, with overcrowding and suchlike and Sue's account seems strangely familiar. Within this overall framework , these places have had differing fates since then . Chepping Wycombe became High Wycombe and has expanded outwards with the inner residential area becoming part of the commercial centre, [Dixey's]. Wavendon and Bow Brickhill have remained pretty much as they started, I imagine, and are now on the outskirts of Milton Keynes [Woodwards]. Haddenham , home of the Piggotts, has also suffered a sharp decline after the enclosure legislation came in 1834. This had the desired effect. The villagers, who had bought themselves out of servitude for an enormous cash payment in 1625 and were enthusiastic supporters of parliament in the civil war , now became deprived of their land. The rural landlords cashed in, and the villagers were slowly forced into wage slavery in capitalist industry. The population decreased from 1600 in 1841 to 1200 to 1901. Even the railway only temporarily stemmed the flow and it is only in the recent past that industry and new housing has expanded the village.

All the rural exiles came to North London and there are many references to houses and places in a corner of Kentish Town, or N W 5. Many of the streets are still there - a number have disappeared - but the whole area was rebuilt with low level housing blocks in the 1950/60s. In addition, my family lived mainly in the old style houses in Mansfield Road, where many of the photos were taken, at number 35, but after the war, we stayed in Countess Road for a while. Rose and David Jackson lived in Torriano Avenue, N W 5 before going to Broadstairs. Other members of the Piggott and Morris family lived in these streets and Henry Piggott lived at 76 Wellesley Road for example, after coming up from Haddenham. Lastly, the context of work also has changed. So many of our forefathers were simply "agricultural labourers", and their partners registered just as "Wife". This is a crude description and we have no knowledge of their satisfaction with their "occupation". There are some written texts on the role of women in particular [Rice] a very early Penguin paperback] and the rise of unions are perhaps a comment in themselves, beyond being basic protection in the workplace. For farm work, see Walter Rose below.

Today's generation is different and most have skills of some sort. While for many, jobs may still be unrewarding, for others entry into a useful profession is now a reality. The basic economic relationship however remains unaltered and today, it's the teachers, posties and office workers who are likely to be on the picket lines rather than the miners or metal workers.

The underlying story

As I got deeper into the construction of the story about the four families, I realised that behind the routine sorting of the facts, some important themes were emerging. Perhaps the first was that identifying details of ancestors, was in fact giving them some official recognition - which they may not have had a lot of in their lifetimes. True the details seem limited to just full names, places of birth and residence, ages, jobs, families, relationships and little more but that at least is something. In fact, it now appears as a classic piece of "history from below", not just the usual events of the famous. A book that looks at the wider experience of workers as a whole is E P Thompson's "The Making of the Working Class" which is a ground breaking masterpiece. Our story is less grand, shorter but more interesting personally

Second of all would come the dominance of traditional institutions, practices and ideas. This is partly the role of religion and churches and it is pleasant to recall the quick decline of the concepts of the subordination of women to men, the bans on same sex relationships and the automatic deference to the rich. The impact of war on the life and death of those that went before is still enough to inspire anger, in me at least. This a legacy of the 1960s and the passing of the deferential society and all that will not be mourned.

The third tendency is to wonder at is the rise of technology. The application of science to promoting health , aiding communications and radically altering conditions in the home stands out in the comparison of the bare facts of life in the past. Sometimes today it is difficult to imagine the world without penicillin, the Pill, mobile phones, photocopying and the internet but somehow they managed.

Perhaps this can be summed up by noting the independence from overwhelming authority that is now possible , the awareness of wider perspectives that follow education and the internet, and the freedom from disease and death that seems inherent in the bald repetition of facts. A consideration of the people from the past may well be different for each individual but at least we can now know something of the facts of life as they were and consider our own in that light. We have freedom of some sort.

Now for a look at the families in more detail : the Dixey's

We go back to Walter Dixey, born 1851, who married twice and had three and four children respectively. All the family were born in Chepping Wycombe , the old name for High Wycombe , except Mary Ann E Harney [1854-1885] and Ada Ellen Buggs [1864- ?] who were born in Kensington and Vauxhall, London, respectively The family lived in White Hart Street and Eastern Street, right in the centre of the town, now commercial property, then moved the north London . Please note that the name is sometimes spelt as "Dixcey."

Our interest centres on Francis, born 4 Nov 1884, died 1963, one of six children, who married Herbert George Woodward in 1905 and eventually gave birth to 12 children with three men , Woodward [8], Pengelly[1] and Atkins [3] . One child was still born , possibly from an abortion. In later life she also married Alfred J Pile in 1954 and survived him, reportedly inheriting some houses ?

Francis married HG Woodward, lived in Wellesley Road, and on his death appealed to her family for help. This was apparently refused, though they had a thriving shop at the time. See the text below for other details . She died, living with her son Frederick Earnest and his family in Broadstairs, after a railway accident, in 1963.

While investigating the family, I was struck by the similarity of Mary Ann E Harney and the wife of George Julian Harney, the Chartist leader. Her name was the same and the supposition is that she passed this onto her possible daughter who then married into the Dixey family . The biography of GJ Harney has details of his wife who was like Francis tall, intelligent and quite attractive. The book suggests that the wife 'died' in 1854 but no details are given. Whether this was a polite fiction , or she died in childbirth like her possible daughter Mary Harney, is impossible to say so, the issue remains open. The circumstantial evidence - physical characteristics and

personality similarity , same name - do lend some credence to the possibility.[Schoyen]

The Woodward's

George Woodward,, a Railway Passenger Guard, was born in Bow Brickhill or Wavendon in 1843, just south of Milton Keynes, and married Joanna Marsh, born 1850 , who was born in Royston, Herts. My cousin Terry Woodward has traced the ancestry right back to a Matthew Woodward , b 1705 and Sarah Sinfield as the furthest back ,and the line goes through William , Robert, two George's , in Wavendon, right up to our granddad, in Bow Brickhill. .

The family moved to Kentish Town in the district of St Pancras where the six children were born. Of these, details only survive for two - Herbert George [1883-May 1920] a railway porter and his brother , Frederick Ernest [1886-1936 ?] who lived and died in the same area but gave his name to his nephew, my father . My paternal grand dad died in the Spanish flu epidemic that killed more than the war in 1920 .

As outlined above, Bertie married Francis Dixey in 1906. They had eight children before his unfortunate death in May 1920, two of whom had died, from reasons unknown. Only Winnie died young, from Hodgkin's disease in 1948, while the others survived into a pensionable age . Our concern is Frederick Ernest Woodward , born 2 Dec 1912 , died Dec 1978. He was a railway worker like his father, being a car man when he married in 1938 to Edna May Morris.

The Piggotts

Henry Piggott was born in Haddenham, Bucks, in 1864 and had an early job as a shepherd [lost report]. He was the fourth of five children to Jesse and Ruth ; three sisters Alice , Emma and Fanny, with his father an agricultural labourer and his mother a lace maker, all born in Haddenham and living at a cottage, Milestone, in South End [now Tufty Cottage in the High Street].

Haddenham is an unusual village. As well as being the home of the Piggotts , and the place to which I and my family were evacuated during the war , and after it as well, it is the subject of an account written during the 1930s and published in 1942 , by local author Walter Rose. This describes the history of the villagers in the previous 50 years and the changes therein. It is very detailed. The village has its own Museum in the High Street. A local clay , witchert, or white earth , has traditionally been used for building until recent times . The village had been 'enclosed ' by an Act of Parliament in 1834 which of course led to a big fall in population . The lure of higher industrial wages may also have contributed to this .

To London

But back to Henry Piggott, my great grand dad. By 1891, he was living as a lodger with another Haddenham family, the Bunces, in 76 Wellesley Road, N W 5 ; he was a bricklayers labourer like his older brother John,

according to the Census . He married Janet Bunce who had been born in 1869 in Uxbridge, it seems . They had at least five children , living in Kentish Town, of whom Edith Fanny Piggott, [born 1894 died 12 Sept 1968] was the oldest. Of her brothers, Arthur died in the war 1914-98 ; Alfred James, born 1902, married and emigrated to Canada where his family still live, notably Derek . Jessie was deaf but no more is known. A mysterious brother, Henry, appears on the 1901 Census but no more is known. A case of childhood death ?

Edith was a bottle factory worker and picked up with Albert George Morris who she married around 1914. The family lived in Mansfield Road , Kentish Town, in rented accommodation.

Later her daughter Edna and her family moved to Broadstairs, Kent, and she and her husband, and her father also moved into the house at 33a Upton Road. The old fellow lived on to be 91, sitting all day watching the traffic on the Broadstairs Road, with his pipe , before he died in 1954 ?. He is buried in nearby St Peters Church, Thanet . His wife had died aged 79 on 20 May 1948 and is buried in Highgate Cemetery. Information from Derek Piggott, who now lives in Canada..

The Morris's

Albert George Morris, [born December 1887- died 18 Nov 1962] was the third of four children born in Hampstead to John and Lucy. Both parents were London born . The father was a road labourer for the parish. They lived at 3 Southwell Terrace in New End , N W 3. This was just yards from the grandest workhouse in the world , St John Hampstead, still an impressive building today. Later they moved to Fairfax Mews , now Fairfax Place , off the Finchley Road at Swiss Cottage

Of the children, there is no more info on John ; two sisters - Louisa or Lou, who married a man called Reed and had two children, Edie and Lilly ; and the younger Lillian , " skimmed milk and Nestles (full cream condensed milk) - and who married Harry Wilson ;

Two more characters appear in the photos Florence Maud [later possibly Root] of whom no more is known; and Fred who also served in the army, but these are unrecorded.

Albert, aged 18, enrolled in the Army in 1906 for 12 years and on his barely literate enrolment form, registers himself as a "printers labourer". Private A G Morris , 8658, was in the A Company, 1st West Riding Regt , and the later the Wellington Regiment. He served as a cook in the Army - UK and India - and spent the rest of his life as a "light " worker in the Prince of Wales Road Baths, Camden Town. This later achieved a moment of notoriety when widespread asbestos was discovered.

Albert married Edith Fanny Piggott , "Pop" and "Nan". They lived in Mansfield Road , he drank in the pub at the top of the road , the Mansfield, and other places, as he was a regular drinker and pub performer,

Further evidence, an oral account from my Aunt Sue My dad's sister Sue, who lived for many years in Swiss Cottage, where she had been for 32 years does give some personal memoirs of her life and that of her family. It is not 100% accurate. She died in 2010. I spoke to her and she said -

"My mother, whose maiden name was Francis Edith Dixey, was, I think, an only child, and her parents had a good quality second hand furniture shop in the Harrow Road area. It was always said that she had married beneath her social level and she was quite haughty at times. Her husband Herbert George Woodward had a good job as a railway worker and he had paid into a Widows and Orphans Fund.

"The key event in the family history was the death of my father aged 34 in 1920 from the Spanish flu epidemic that killed millions. It was a real turning point. My parents at that time had had eight children - Winnie born in 1905, Daisy and Bertie, Rose born 1908 ?, Freddie [my dad] born 1911, Bill born 1914, myself born in 1916 and Gladys born 1918. The children had mixed fortunes - Winnie died from Hodgkin's Disease in 1949, she only lived six weeks after being diagnosed, Daisy and Bertie died in infancy, but my mother often talked about them. Freddie and Rose died in the 1970's. Ivy died from leukaemia in 1984. The rest of us - Bill, Gladys and me - are still alive. [This was in the year 2000]

"The authorities wanted to put all of us into a railway orphanage, but my mother resisted and in the end only Freddie went there. Bill and I went to a Charity Orphanage in Leavesden near Watford, what was effectively a workhouse. While I was there the only two people to show me any love was a nurse called Eva and my friend Ester. It was not a friendly place. We all had the same clothing, not poor quality, but parental visits were only allowed every few months, I believe. I remember the first one, my mum was still dressed in her widows weeds - it was the custom to wear them for a year in those days - and she was accompanied by my Uncle Fred who had no children of his own. I stayed there for eight years and came out aged 12. I went to the school in Rhyll Street for 2 years, until the school leaving age of 14. In those days you left the week of your birthday not the end of term. The other school for the area was in Carlton Road, at the other end of Queens Crescent.

"Afterwards my mum re-married to Alexander Atkins, had another child that was still-born, then she had four more children Jimmy, Dolly, Alex and Ivy. In all she had 13 children. There was another tragedy when Dolly died of lead poisoning and Alexander died from meningitis, after one days illness, all in one week. I remember this event well, my mother was demented ! Dolly had died suddenly aged 5, after coming home from

school and she went the next day. A few days later Alex, woke in the night, there were four of us in the bed. After some hours of crying, my mum took him down the Temperance Hospital in Camden - a fever hospital it was - where he died some hours later. I think it was meningitis and of course they did not know how to treat it in those days. He had only been three and this was two deaths in one week. The practice was to let the bodies lie in the parlour in the house. In an unusual event the Inquest was held at our house in 6 Wellesley Road by a famous man Sir Bernard Spillsbury, and I think the medical verdict was confirmed. It was a very distressing time, I normally looked after the younger children.

"Jimmy went into the Marines and was at Arnheim. He was psychologically disturbed from that experience and was invalided out, but never got a pension. He died aged 60. Ivy, the youngest child, died from leukaemia in 1984 ...

"My mum got by with doing charring work, that is scrubbing doorsteps and using wetstone to whiten them, at 6d [old pence] a time (This is old pre-decimal money; 12 pence to a shilling and 20s to a pound, £, hence LSD, with 240d or old pence to the old pound. So 6d would be worth about 2p or new pence) . My step dad who was a well built man and had been a stoker in the Navy, often tried to get work in the docks. He walked to the West India Docks but casual work at half a crown [two shillings and sixpence in old money] an hour was difficult to get and if he did get work it was straight into the pub afterwards. He always polished his boots before he left and said that a man was nothing without clean boots. When he had no money, he tried to borrow off the ones who were working. In the end he got to knocking us kids about so Winnie, Rose and Bill all left home together and lived elsewhere.

"There was great poverty in those days, the world was in a terrible state, the government didn't give you any money and there was no such thing as the DHSS. I went to school without shoes. The only family that had new clothes was that of two sisters living opposite us in Wellesley Road where the man had a stable job. Everyone else was in old second hand clothing. For birthdays you were lucky if you got a present, sometimes if it fell on a Sunday, we went around all our aunts with a little cup and that might put a half-penny in it. There is an expression about people not having two happenies to rub together, and you could get something with tuppence [2d], in those days.[See the note on the Poor Law below]

"Many times, I was given a paper bag by my mum and told 'There's no money, you'll have to go to the [Queens Crescent] market and pick up some fruit and vegetables from under the stalls for us to eat'. The usual way for us to live was we would have to get up early about 6 o'clock and go

down the bakers, a lovely shop in Queens Crescent with a pillow case, and get 6d of stale bread, that was about 6 or 7 loaves, and 2d of stale cakes, that was about 3 or 4, if you were lucky. A fresh loaf cost 2d. We would also go down the market in Queens Crescent for milk, 2d for a jug, and cracked eggs, because you could often find a tray of them under the stalls. Some eggs and stale bread, and you were well away.

"The other source of food was from the Relief Centre in Holmes Road (see note). The fathers had to go for the food and so my dad went and carried it back in one of those very large prams, a Bassonette. They were larger than the Marmets, with big wheels and proper springs. He used to get a big 4 lb. loaf and cut it into thick slices, we called them doorsteps, and we would eat them with treacle or sugar, which was very cheap. Some times we had them cooked - fried doorsteps!

"Most of the time we lived in Kentish Town, in 6 Wellesley Road mainly, like everyone else, in tenements, a floor in a big house. We did sometimes have two floors. My mum "forgot " to pay the rent so we were often on the move." Later we lived in Boscastle Road, then Chalk Farm Road and so on. They were all flea ridden places with bugs. I've lived here in this tower block since 1968, 22 floors with seven flats on each floor. Recently most of the people moving in have not been English, foreigners. The private houses round here sell at about £200,000, that is the small ones. I did want to move out once but my husband, Bill, wouldn't hear of it.

"The other problem in those days was health. There was no clinics or health practices and doctors were too expensive. Because it cost 5 shillings to see a doctor, unless a child was near death, it never saw a doctor. I saw a doctor when I got married and it cost 5s. When a woman had a baby, as she went into labour she'd sent a child up the road to get the woman. She might charge 5s for delivering it. There was no money for medicine in those days. Winnie was not seen until it was too late, but at least she went to Mount Vernon Hospital which was a change [on the NHS]. My mum would take aspirins for any illness, she'd take a whole lot of them. Later when there was medicine, if you didn't take it, she would.

"I was good at hand sewing and wanted to be a seamstress but the teachers told my mum that I would have to serve an apprenticeship and pay £50. They employed girls to sew dresses for the Court but there was no way the governess would allow me to get that work. So I went to work with my sister Rose in Kemp's Biscuit factory in Brewery Road, Islington. It later moved to the North Circular Road. I did a number of jobs, in the wash room with the tins and packing. The pay at first was about 7s a week I think and for that we worked up to 12 hours a day starting at 7.30 am. I

got 2s a week pocket money and with my first week , I put down 1s on a bicycle.

"In all, I had about eight jobs including ones in a sweet factory, Dalby's, and hand polishing briar pipes at Barlings in Park Street, Camden Town. The pipes came to us roughly shaped but without the mouthpiece. We had to shape them on a grinding wheel with some grinding paste, pumice and oil. The wheel made them smooth. I wonder how they make them today.

"Gladys worked there as well and we had 2d a day for dinner. 1d for a cup of tea and 1d for a stale cake , or we put the money together and had a piece of fish and tea. We walked around all the lunch hour. In those days the family members who worked got the best food and one day, I came in for my tea and my mum gave me sausages. She said 'Did you like that ?' and when I said yes, she said 'Well, they came out of a tin'. We never had tinned food before and I was so surprised, I was nearly sick .

"My older sister Winnie worked most of her life in a wallpaper factory, Shankids in Camden, Princess Diana's family owned it. She met a man in there who became her boyfriend but he was already married. They were always together, and for years, at that place".

"There were no unions until about 1939 or 40, The only union was the print workers and my father in law was in that. It was a closed shop and you had to pass exams. Bill, who was to be my husband, didn't pass the exams and became a butcher for a while .

" I used to go dancing most nights, sometimes it was free but sometimes it cost up to 6d. I got married in 1941. I met my husband Bill Plaister at a dance and married him a year later. He worked with metal at Hadley Page making aircraft and later he was a toolmaker at Smiths Industries. He was very union minded right up to his death in 1991. He was on strike once and his photo was in the papers on the picket line. He was of course a keen Arsenal supporter and I believe that some people called him 'Arsenal Bill'. He was a very likeable man, and wherever you went he always met someone he knew.

" We had three children - Ray who emigrated to Australia and Canada before returned to work in the Post Office. He died a few years ago aged 52 from lung cancer. He was born in 1942, and went to Holloway School after just missing a place at William Ellis. I went up to complain about that but an Asian lad got the last place. Next was Sheila the following year. She worked in a florists shop. She moved to Broadstairs and married Frank. Jenny has always been interested in the theatre and ballet dancing, which she started when she was five. She lives in Southend now and I often go down there to go to the theatre. I have seen Don Quixote, Things

Ain't What They Used To Be, *and* Passport to Pimlico *recently*. *All the children have had children and so on, and I'm a grannie several times."*

"My step father died from natural causes and very late on, my mum married a bloke called Pile. He was 79, she was about 70 and he died after three years. She inherited some houses from this.

"All of my surviving brothers and sisters got married and had families apart from Jimmy. Rose, married Harry Jackson and they had David. Harry was not a healthy man, he had an ulcer or diabetes I think, and died suddenly of a brain tumour. Rose and David moved to Broadstairs. Bill married Et and they had Terry. She died of a heart attack. Terry moved to Tunbridge and later Bill aged 82 got himself a girl friend and moved nearby as well. Gladys married Henry Seymour and they moved to Broadstairs. Pam and Jill are their daughters. Henry was a quiet chap, a postman. Ivy married Ron Wash, a printer and they had Janice, They also moved to Broadstairs then Amersham. When Ivy died, Ron moved back to Broadstairs.

"My mum was a great one for wandering, she was always off out somewhere, to Hampstead Heath and so on. She lived with Freddie and Edna for a while in Broadstairs. She was on an outing to Ramsgate when she seems to have had accident that led to an injury as she fell from the train and was found on the embankment. Freddie's wife, Edna [my mum] got her into a nursing home in Ramsgate, Queens Street I think it was, but she died there after a few months in 1963. She was 75" .

This account was videoed by my son Peter and we still have the tape

Retrospect

Sue lived in a tower block on a rather neat estate and though she had lost the sight of one eye and has some chest problems, she was in her eighties when we spoke to her. She told me that she had smoked cigarettes from the age of 17 but at 35 started getting problems. A chest clinic doctor told her she would die in five years unless she gave up in which case she would live to be 85, and beyond. They got that right.

She described herself as a very busy person. My son Peter made a video tape of her talking after I had audio recorded the first interview. One day after visiting her, on the way to the tube, Peter and I went into a local Oxfam type shop and within a minute or so she rushed in, coat, beret and all, to do her job serving behind the counter of the Winchester Project. She went to pensioners clubs, Henderson Court, and had at the time won £500 in a competition to describe the changes that had occurred to Hampstead over the years.

She describes foreign holidays and commented after a visit to Tunisia, that "there was terrible poverty among the poor there but the hotel was all gleaming marble. There was a huge gap between rich and poor and I hope never to see that again. If that's the only way they can make money, they'll have to do it", she added.

Note on the Poor Law and Orphanages

'Out Relief', as opposed to 'In Relief'- or staying in a workhouse, was grudgingly given under the Poor Law by the Guardians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, despite legislation, but was to become the basis of the slightly more generous cash benefits under the Welfare State.

Bertie Woodward had paid into what was then the National Union of Railwayworkers, NUR, Orphanage Fund. This had, from 1875, set up the Derby Railway Orphanage, maintained by ASRS members subscriptions and many money raising events. This excellent example of working class provision for its own welfare services is a model for many who think only of state provision in this field. It was to Derby that Frederick was sent.

Part Two

The narrative continues with my immediate family schooling and work.

Personal

We now return to the story of myself and my immediate family. I had been born in the last months of peace at the Royal Free Hospital in the Grays Inn Road. The site is still there today as part of the Ears Nose and Throat department. After the war it was moved into new premises at the top of Kentish Town. Once again in the area, in 2010/11, I attended the Royal Free for a damaged finger. My daughter in law had previously had her child Isobel there in 1999 but I had little chance to re-acquaint myself at that time. I had also attended the London Hazards Centre management meetings for many years and the LHC had moved to the area from south Camden around 1995. This was in Haverstock Hill and I did some reconnoitring after the meetings on these evenings. It was disconcerting to go back to Queens Crescent market, Mansfield Road etc and find it like a new town with barely recognisable features. Anyway as a result of my treatment in 2011, I was appointed to the Trust of that hospital, back after 72 years

Immediate Relatives

My dad, Fred, who like his father had been a railway worker, a cabman in his case, was named after his uncle Frederick Ernest Woodward. He had lived in Bassett Road off Queens Crescent and died in April 1954, aged 68. Sue said that he "was a kind man, married to Aunty Edie and was a bit

better off than we were". He was buried in Highgate Cemetery, one of the less illustrious occupants.

My father

My dad had his childhood wrecked by abject poverty and he carried the marks of it all his life. He always seemed anti - social, possibly the effect of having no cash. He had been a policeman in the RAF during the war and this gave him some dignity, he always hankered after this lost world. As an unskilled employee, he had been forced to take the lowest jobs. He started as a labourer on the Council in Broadstairs, then as a driver, and finally was employed as a supervisor. For a period, due to some early deaths, he was actually in charge of the Council Yard in the High Street. It was only in his last ten years that he had anything like security and money to spend. Union officer Tom Snow remembers him, he confirms .

He always resented my political actions, despite being a Labour voter ("Churchill is a warmonger ", as he would say). " You have a job and a family why bother about anything else" was his line. His politics reflected the worse elements about Labour as well as the best. He was for example fully in favour of Banning the Bomb but also of hanging those convicted of murder. The whole fiasco of the miscarriages of justice were of course yet to come, but I was firmly opposed to capital punishment. He was a strong believer in the law, so we had many furious rows over this. Even worse was his "racism" , though this was not the explicit type, more that of unthoughtout assumptions.

Like my mother, he was a heavy smoker and they both died of lung cancer. He was 66 and she 68. She had emphysema in the 1960's and had given up and said that he should too. However I think he still smoked secretly at work. My grandparents had all died in their 70's - except for Spanish flu - and the old boy had lasted out to 93 - a interesting aspect of workers' health under modern capitalism ! Whole generations have had their lives cut short by this vicious system .

My mum

My mother had, I believe, a crucial role in my development. It is difficult to identify exactly the elements in this process. She had the benefit of living in various extended households, so did I. She had alone been responsible for me in war time and repeatedly made it clear to my father that she would deal with the kids. She allowed no corporal punishment and instructed my Nan accordingly, I think. I cannot remember being hit.

My mother was very much a working class mum on the classic lines and definitely ran the household. My dad's attitude was to take little interest in the home or the kids, even when I played football for the school. I also got a district trial. He did turn up when I won a medal for boxing in the Air

Training Cadets but that was it. His alienation seemed inexplicable to me at the time and I reacted to his occasional attempts at control. I understand it better now. As Mark Twain remarked 'When I was young my parents were quite ignorant, but since I've grown older, I'm amazed how much they've learnt'.

In her youth, my mum worked in the Prince of Wales Baths, possibly as a 'superintendent' but had been in the Salvation Army and set great store by honesty, integrity and telling the truth. My early ventures into collective shoplifting to make up for the absence of toys must have upset her. The poverty meant there were few rules and she was often busy, either at home working on the sewing machine, or doing domestic work at a local residential "home". Even so, she claimed to be a Conservative, probably out of some reaction to the passivity of my father. I do have some photos of the pair of them either camping or youth hostelling at Betws y Coed in North Wales in 1937 - "doing the washing up" - so they did get about.

My family position

My position as first born meant that I got a lot of attention. This and my excellent school record led to my brothers' detriment, I think. Because of my experience, I have always been sensitive to the problems of the second child and with both my own children and my grandchildren, I have tried to take corrective action. But more of this later.

At any rate, I have always been self confident and my parental treatment seems part of the reason. I was always encouraged to read and allowed to dispute her authority. For example, I was told to brush my teeth but refused. "What did people do before the toothbrush was invented?" I argued. "You tell me that and I'll do it". She went away and thought about it. Promoting a child's strong sense of curiosity and independence has always seemed to me to be a sign of a sensible upbringing and my mother certainly did that.

She was a major influence on me and I believe my disposition towards revolutionary politics was unintentionally down to her. This is due to the fact that she also influenced my attitude as a "loner". I have always been my own man, never content to do something just because everyone else did. This has marked me out as a person "difficult" to get on with in a political organisation but able and willing to think things out for myself. The label "difficult" is of course the bureaucracy commenting on my non conformity and a warning to all loyal comrades. Be that as it may I always have been, and will be, a person "doubting everything" in the tradition of the old socialists

I left home at 16, nearly 17, and was to live away from home for good. My mum got some satisfaction from my progress but accepted I had a separate life to lead. My brothers Peter and Brian, and sister Pat, stayed in Broadstairs, indeed other family members moved down from London. All my siblings got married but all, bar Brian, are now separated. After me, Peter who had three children, Brian, Simon and Diane, split from his wife, Christine. Peter spent most of his life as a low paid but efficient motor mechanic, after a hectic youth but later on worked in a sign making factory, doing unskilled work but getting much more money. With the easy life he began to put on weight. Peter suffered from being a second child I think Pat married Graham Denton, an electrician who had worked down the mines but more recently as a self employed electrician. Pat had years of ill health and this may have affected their separation. She still does the business paper work. The children Debra and Paul are in relationships and have moved away. Debra does look a close copy of Grannie Woodward, startlingly so. Pat looked after my mum in her illness, in the classic carer way.

Brian has worked in the nearby Margate hospital for decades, as a porter. Somehow despite the appalling pay, he and his wife Jackie, have managed to bring up Karen and Maxine. Like all the family they are supporters of Arsenal FC, the result of an acquaintanceship of my dad with Laurie Scott and other club players during the war. It can be seen that my family live normal working class lives. Comparing my attitude to those of my siblings, I cannot fully explain the differences but I think I have indicated some of the factors.

Back to the text - Schooling

My education went on despite my failure at 11. The primary school I had attended was run by a man called W J Reed, a follower of G B Shaw. He was the Secretary of the national organisation for the reform of English Language Spelling I discovered later. I only remember him giving me a reading test and criticising my pronunciation. When I failed the selection exam, he recommended me for a selective secondary school in nearby Ramsgate, a church school called S Georges, where my fight against authority continued. This was a Central School, a type of better class secondary modern school. I remember mainly my last form teacher, a man called Evans who gave me a lift when I was hitchhiking a few years later; the old head who became such when the former person was caught stealing, old 'Uncle Frank' White; my science teacher, ex 'Music' called Mr Caine, later a taxi driver, and a maths teacher, Mr Calhoun [?]

It was a curious existence. I resented the regime and constantly got into trouble. My parents were very anxious, however that I should "get on", they

felt keenly the rigours of being at the bottom end of the working class and expressed a common attitude of the time, that I should become qualified and get a good job.

It was here I got my first nick name. A teacher was also called Woodward and because of his manner was called "Polly". Hence I became Pol. I was a diligent student, getting class prizes of vouchers most years. One year, the books were to be given out by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and I had chosen a small book on underwater swimming and a large one, the comic *Radio Times Annual* for 1953 or whatever, to get the full amount of the voucher. The old boy was a little senile and seeing the comic book, but not the smaller one beneath it, made up a silly comment that he hoped I would benefit from it. This seemed a particularly inane thing to say. I was already severely disenchanted with religion, wondering if there was a god, how "he" allowed the gross poverty that I and my family were suffering from.

A trip to London, and the no 24 bus

I subsequently recorded some points about my 'holidays' - real ones were too expensive -with my Uncle Bubbles -

My first ride on a London bus - I went to London on a coach , alone at the age of 13 , or so, and was met by my uncle Bubbles at Victoria Coach Station. We caught a 24 bus to the Kentish Town / Hampstead borders. We got off at Dominic's Priory and walked to his rooms in Maitland Park Villas. I had a week . or two "holiday " with him and his family - Aunt Lil , cousins Pamela and Daphne - before coming back. The journey to Broadstairs this time was un-remarkable. The year would have been 1953 or thereabouts. Where they lived was a huge house, very close to the dwelling of the socialist thinker Karl Marx and he had buried at least one dead child in the big gardens.

My family had moved to Broadstairs but we lived in almost total poverty so my mum fixed up a sort of reciprocal arrangement whereby her brother's two children would come down for a holiday and I would go up to London. Hence my adventure on a coach to north London. My uncle worked in various fruit and vegetable shops, belonging to Thomas Walton situated at tube stations , though later he was to up sticks and go to the country as a farm worker which supplied tied cottages as well. Meanwhile in London, life went on but I can only remember one event. That was a trip to the speedway races at nearby Harringay . The star was a Wembley team rider Split Waterman. I did ask him if he had read any books recently , and he said, yes , A History of Torture, I had to get him to repeat the title as I didn't understand his pronunciation at first. He did not say any more on it .

Money was refused when I left, but as instructed I left a ten shilling note [50p] by my bed. This was a considerable sum as people were only getting

around thirty bob [£1-50] a week in wages. I kept up visiting the family for many years till I left school in 1956 aged 16. Eventually my uncle died from an occupation disease. My aunt took a new partner, George, and was suffering from dementia when I spoke to her in 2010. I sent her the draft of the family history, and she gave me many photos. "That's all gone now" she said.

She and Bubbles were married in 1944, ?, and there were links for many years between the siblings. My own memories were strong. Every summer I would go to the farm, far from the number 24 bus, and assist whenever I could. There had an easy going routine and it was a highlight of my year. I was closer to them than any other family members except perhaps my cousin David. The family eventually settled in Hampshire after living all around the south east - Tring, Ipswich, Eynesford in Kent and so on. They all lived eventually around Basingstoke but see the note above on their deaths

Work and ideas

From the age of 13 or was it 14, I was contributing to the budget by doing various paper rounds and other jobs. Morning, evening and weekend, all weathers, I rode my bike around the town delivering newspapers. My mum stood in for me when I couldn't make it.

There is one incident arising from my paper round which has some significance in retrospect. The local airport at Manston was run by the American Air Force and some dozens of Thunderjet fighter planes were based there. One Sunday morning, one crashed into some houses in the town. Next morning I read all the papers about this and was amazed at the variety of accounts. Some got the time wrong, others the place or the type of aeroplane. I should have learnt at the time the accuracy of newspaper reports.

A broader point emerges. The conflict between reality and the media version does have some validity when the role of the mass media in under discussion by reformist socialists, but it does not have the all powerful role sometimes given to it. Other institutions carry out socialisation and newspapers more often just reinforce it. However this is all hindsight and I'm afraid I didn't learn much from the experience at the time.

One further point arises from the American troops stationed at Manston. There was a colour bar which meant that the white troops went to Margate and the black ones to Ramsgate, on their nights off duty. Ramsgate is of course a working port, the home of many Kent miners and had some Labour Party councillors. It was also a favourite resort of Karl Marx and his family. How strongly the colour bar was enforced was unclear but the fact that everyone knew about it suggests it was general. [*When Jim Crow met John Bull*, G Smith] Later I learnt that there had been an early branch of the Socialist Review group, to become the International Socialists and

Socialist Workers Party, in the town. One member was Mickey Thompson, a mate of mine from the Air Training Corps who worked in the library, and Chris Davison who was to rise to prominence then disappear to Swanage..

I was on free school dinners, a staple diet of bread and jam and had only discovered that clothes could be new when I got my school uniform with a grant. We attended a lot of jumble sales. I'm sure others could be in as bad a situation but to me it seemed pretty unfair .

Religion

I am writing a diversion at this point on religion , a subject that absorbed me in these years The fact that my school was Church run seemed to elevate the church to a position of great authority and I rebelled against it. My politics at this time were confused but I was on the right track with religion. In fact I gave it more significance than it deserved, but you dig where you are, as they say.

A few years later, despite the appalling shortage of literature, I was to adopt Marxism and see religion in a slightly modified light - the chief enemy was elsewhere. I still use a 4 point plan to deal with believers of any kind in a supernatural "god". Is there a god ? If yes, does s/he intervene in human affairs ? If yes, on what basis, is proper morality rewarded in a recognisable way ? If yes, how do you account for the tens of thousands of children that die daily from poverty related illness and who clearly have not been immoral ? This usually has them floundering with answers about god's own time, and mysterious ways, etc., etc.

At about this time or possibly a bit later, I discovered *The Freethinker* and *The Humanist*, respectively the tabloid and broad sheets of atheism. Later on I enjoyed the story in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* where a socialist heckler confronts a religious outdoor speaker with the quotation from Mark Chapter 18 in the *New Testament* which promises immunity from poison for true believers. The speaker is then offered a glass of "poison" to test the theory. He of course refuses and his efforts collapse in a round of laughter. In real life, exactly the same events followed a Japanese government spokesman who claimed that plutonium, even if it got into drinking water, was harmless. I think the Japanese, like all sensible people, retained their apprehension about nuclear power, if not religion

Over the years I had very little to do with religion and churches. I was married in a Catholic church and got transferred from working in a Catholic school because I insisted on wearing a *Ban The Bomb* badge [a cross would be acceptable, I was told]. With another YS member Alan Richardson , my partner Maureen was involved in a religious affairs programme on *Love and Marriage* through Gus McDonald who had

recently been a comrade in the Young Socialists newspaper *Young Guard* but who was much later put in charge of Scottish television in the 1990's. He was an appointment as Lord MacDonalld in the Blair New Labour government. One of the few comrades who became renegades , or went over to the other side.

Later

In 1965 I wrote an article for *Labour Worker* 37 entitled *The Money behind God* which showed the Catholic Church as being very rich and very much part of capitalism, with financial links all over the world. Due to some oversight, it was unsigned and may have appeared to be editorial policy. The following issue carried a letter from 3 AEU workers at ENV factory in Acton, West London who were in the Labour Party. They validly pointed out that the title should have referred to the Vatican, not God, and that the accompanying photo was that of a dead Pope.

Alternative

Instead of religion I did subsequently adopt the ideas of marxism , which I regarded as a more systematic analysis. While some would consider the words "systematic analysis " to be a heresy and that Marxism is a scientific theory, this I think is quite an incorrect view. The description "systematic" seems more accurate. For something to be "scientific" it has to be subject to testing, and the various elements selected out and defined. That simply cannot happen with a theory about human society, which is complex and ever changing. The observation, or process of testing, is itself a variable factor. If it were possible to proceed scientifically, it would be possible to consider any given situation and predict future events.

There is a further reason for abandoning the claim of being "scientific". Socialism is regarded by many people with some suspicion as being authoritarian. This is based on a perception of the Soviet Bloc, encouraged of course by our disinterested politicians. This is not entirely false. Moreover, people's main experience of collective organisations in their own lives, the trade unions, etc are often models of top down control. General Secretary's and other full time officers are always well above the members control, though of course shop stewards are not. Hence for many people the direct personal experience of the CP or national union is linked to political control.

It is precisely the association of authoritarianism and centralisation and scientific principles that pre-disposes many potential members away from action on politics. Yes, the struggle is international - yes, there is a need for discipline and order but our appeal ought to be to the liberating elements in socialism. Our capacity to control our own lives and organisations should be the theme of our socialism.

School and after

After this diversion, back to my schooldays which were largely unremarkable. My year group did push forward the phenomena of secondary school children taking GCE's . After a useful experiment in collective education that we called a homework club, I took my exams. I duly got my certificate, five subjects, along with two other "star" pupils, Ronnie Hoare and Dave Reeve. I always felt a special affinity to Ronnie. He went to a merchant navy training school in West London. I did see him in London while at college but then I entirely lost track of him. I have wondered for years how and where he finished up.

Looking back I can see that I was very like the working class grammar school boy who rejected the imposition of a false set of values that conflicted with the working class background. Most of these children apparently dropped out but I was caught up in a new situation with progressive teachers. My relative success was due to these exceptional circumstances. Personally I really liked school , it gave me a perspective on the world and I was good at it.

Some other fellow pupils deserves some mention. Alan Cecil was the son of a Kent miner, a whole family of them had moved there from Wales. They pooled their coal allowance and set up a coal-fired fish and chip shop. It was run by the elderly Uncle Harold. I well remember going to the shop every day for a fish dinner over the summer of 1957 while working in the Post Office in Ramsgate, awaiting national service. I lost touch with all my school friends when I moved up to London so I have no idea where he finished up, The fish and chip shop finished up bankrupt and closed - a victim of market forces and cheap gas you could say.

By bike

To get to school, I cycled over to Ramsgate every day, usually accompanied by Fred Waller and Les Halleybone. The latter lived close to the sea front, with an elderly mum or granny. He later returned to South Wales apparently to follow a career as a firefighter. He did stay with us for a while after having been evicted from his home for some undisclosed misdemeanour. Fred was a thin gangly boy, an only child, who lived with his granny, in Bradstowe Way, his mother being dead or absent and his dad being a mysterious watchmaker in Ramsgate. Fred always had money which his granny gave him and he financed Les and I to a drink of Vimto at the Penny Drink shop on our way home at Hearson Road. We rarely had any money but Fred cheerfully paid up regularly for his mates.

A third person from our class was Chris Summerson, who lived in Edge End Road. He also lived with a granny, or some elderly woman dressed in black with a very pale countenance. One day he and I were discussing

things and one of as described Fred as a "queer cove", the latter word being Elizabethan slang apparently. I forget who said it but on consideration we both found the description be hilariously accurate, if unfair, and we were reduced to near hysterics for some time. The incident sticks in my memory to this day.

Other boys in my class were Johnnie Rance and Cliff Lycett who both joined the merchant navy, and "Nipper" Ferris who lost a foot in a motorbike accident. Brian Mitchell was a stocky lad who later joined the Guards and became something of a local celebrity. He and I had a big fight in a nearby park after school one day, and against the odds I knocked him down. I had done some boxing at the ATC where a local policemen motorbike rider [water cooled Velocet] trained us. I won a medal when the ATC took on the local school in a competition, Hearson, who beat us 9-1. In both instances, my left hand style, - southpaw, though I am right handed - and natural aggression, won the day.

Introduction to work

One other feature deserves mention. From the age of thirteen I did a paper round, quite small at first but later progressing to one that involved both morning and evening deliveries. This did need the use of a bike which I had to maintain. When I was late home from school or delayed for some reason, my mum would get on the bike and deliver the papers herself.

I got a small amount of wages but I've forgotten how this was spent, possibly some part to my mum and the rest for me but I'm not sure. We were living a stark poverty at the time so something like this may have been the arrangement. Later I also did a week end round of delivering "What's On" as a further means of cash and my brother Peter did something similar for the next thirty years for the same reason. Hard times.

On leaving school, I abandoned ambitions to be a Customs Officer - as my eyesight was weak. and I signed up as a civil servant working as a Clerical Officer in "Her Majesty's" Stationery Office. I had always wanted to avoid office work but here seemed no other option so I moved up to London and lived in a hostel on Blackheath. This was a Civil Service establishment, but others were allowed in. There was Harry, a teacher with one lung, and an ex professional rugby player who had become fat, and my first contact with a gay man who seemed anxious to get his hands on me.

There was the usual contingent of Scotsmen, including a guy called Norry Valentine an articulate but individualist working class clerk. How many such people exist even today ? One remarkable person was Phil Darcy, a member of the Church of Scotland and a keen socialist. He was later to work in Kirkcaldy as a social worker and a very good one too. He tried hard

to win me over from my position that can at best be described as sceptical. For example, he was firmly against the Suez invasion, while I ignored it. He recently made contact and we meet up but he hadn't changed and neither had I.

After 18 months or so, I got fed up with the commuting from Westbourne Park, to the office in Stamford Street and days out on the heath so I contacted the Schools Career Service about alternative work. They came up with a teachers course. I was accepted at the College of S Mark and S John, at that time located in Kings Road Chelsea, and I was put forward for "early" National Service. Everyone else was subject to a delay which meant going in at 19 or even 20. Over the summer, I worked at a Post Office counter in Ramsgate for two months or so, then off to the RAF.

In uniform

This chapter ends the chronological sequence with my enlistment for National Service. Some years earlier, I had joined the Air Cadets (ATC), as there was nothing else to do in a small town. The Flight Lieutenant in charge had made me a corporal, "to give me some responsibility", he said. I enjoyed the few years in the ATC, the sport - boxing was the order of the day - and the summer camp made up for the lack of holidays. And there was always the 'holidays' at RAF stations. From this brief experience, I can see the attraction of the armed services for working class children - status, pay, travel and so on.

Be that as it may, the experience also led to service in the Air Force where I became a socialist, as described below. We conscripts held the regulars in great contempt, not realising that many of them had joined up during the slump years because of no other employment. One story explains the relationships. Progress through the ranks was rapid, Air Craftsman 2, then AC 1, then Leading AC and onto Senior AC in your last 12 months. Each rank carried more money.

The problem was that to become SAC required a test, in this case to be able to type at so many words a minute. We all failed every month. Then I noticed that we were given the same passage to type each time, something on Agriculture. I worked through Air Ministry Orders and found the passage. We all practised it repetitively and passed easily. The regulars were amazed and could find no explanation. We just laughed and drank more beer, not even considering that our way may have been 'cleared' in advance.

We had an "8 pints Club" at the time, once a week I should add. Unlike the others, I drank "black and tan", Guinness and bitter mixed, without realising the significance of the term. The real Black and Tans were a mix of prison inmates recruited by the British Army for the sole purpose of

intimidating the Irish in the war for independence. Curious how politics filters down. More on this in the next chapter.

Notebooks

I spent a lot of time reading up on historical subjects in this period. I also developed the habit of writing up my thoughts, views, conclusions, questions, etc, in a notebook. I began at this time and have continued with them, irregularly over the years. Some of the writing is my personal thoughts, some parts are notes of meetings, or articles for newspapers. Reminders and instructions to myself, addresses and phone numbers, book details and references are duly noted down, but I did not do this systematically. Sometimes I relied on memory or was just too busy to write. However this is all I have to go on, apart from my unreliable memory so I have used these in the writing of this autobiography.

For these years, the note books are full of musings on the failure of religion and factual notes on History. I was starting to read quite widely and without the benefit of formal tuition, I was picking my way through ideas and reformulating my views accordingly. Today, they make dull reading but I am astonished how perceptive I was to become within a short period. I have tried to stay true to the ideals and opinions that I thought out at this time. Many people change their view as they grow older, "mature" as they would describe it, but I have generally found that my judgement in my twenties was sound and rational, and I accept it today as such.

My own feelings

Though in this rambling first chapter I have expressed my thoughts on events and my situation, in general this has not been the case. I have had to edit subsequent chapters to add my personal feelings, almost as an after thought. This is not because of repression, in fact for most of my life I have been deeply content with myself, apart from certain periods as noted. I can only think of two exceptions in the years above - once when a beastie landed on me as an infant and I was terrified for hours, and secondly when I lost the money my mum gave me for the Saturday morning kids matinee cinema and I sat at the kerb crying. I did go in the end.

Consequences

This inner contentment had I think made me into a loner, I have been dependent on no-one or nothing else. This attitude bred a sort of confidence which re-inforced the other. One final element - throughout these chaotic years of moving, etc, I think I developed a sense of carrying on regardless. This also added to the idea of proceeding anyway, whatever the circumstances, and this also contributed to my complex/simple approach. Hence my feelings have always been part of

my self contained personality and usually did not reach the surface. The reader may find their absence curious but I have done my best to include them in the end .

Political background

The years covered by this chapter were the years of the start of the welfare state. It was a period when I was unaware of the events of political life which were quite important in a historical sense. All the evidence describes the expansion of schooling, the establishment of the National Health Service and so on. There was full employment, much building of houses. The long boom was changing people's perceptions and expectations. However much of this alleged prosperity seemed to pass by me and my family. We were still experiencing the scourges of the 1930's that the welfare state had been set up to slay, Poverty, Ignorance, Squalor and so on. Progress had been very modest in our book.

In the factories and workplaces, shop stewards were beavering away and setting new standards of organisations and pay levels. The Communist Party was at its height, then in sudden crisis of the Hungarian invasion in 1956, began the long decline that was to lead to it's extinction. *The Newsletter* was set up as the instant replacement but was soon to be revealed as organ of one of the weirder Trotskyist groups. Dave Widgery's excellent book describes all this. The book has been extensively criticised by for minor factual inaccuracies [Coates]. Be that as it may, it is certain that this remains a crucial source for these early years.

Some points about this chapter : the process of my growing up was characterised by being in an extended working class family, a good deal of poverty and the chance to get qualified by the newly established educational system. My early rebellion was against organised religion and the notion of God, and the chapter goes on to look at the nature of a belief in socialism. My consciousness did not encompass the political events of the age which are now commonplace.

Chapter Two RAF , Socialism and the Party

This chapter deals more extensively with my National Service, then teacher training, commitment to Socialism and early experience in the IS Group. There is a preliminary note on Tony Cliff , founder of the IS. It also covers my marriage, activity in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Young Socialists and Labour Party. I lived in and West London, and Islington for the duration. The years range from 1957 to 1964.

It would be true to say that up to the age of 18, I had no consistent political views. My ideology, such as it was, centred on anti religious notions. My emotional response was that of rebellion to forms of authority, my allegiance to others in the same position as myself. Then came 2 years military service. The experience of being in an entirely controlled situation and sharing the experience with others began to open up my mind. During the basic training period of national service, all the conscripts were harried and bullied and ordered about. All our time was filled, we even had to send our civilian clothes back home. It was a situation that created enormous solidarity, and the period of "trade" training was similar. Once through this I was posted out - from oppression to boredom - and eventually stationed at Wyton, in Huntingdon, an H bomber base, and two administrative centres White Waltham and Northwood, a NATO headquarters. At Wyton , I remember little except the mindless less work keeping the runway clear of snow for the bombers. Curious that the sophisticated technology of mass destruction should depend on the menial work of snow shovellers.

White Waltham was my main base. Here I met up with a small group of rebels and, through an educational course, first came into contact with Lenin and Trotsky. The course was a GCE "O" level in Modern History, the teacher a young officer, Alan Read, who had clearly been at university during the 1956 revolution in Hungary. He had a lot of knowledge about the 1917 revolution in the USSR, Stalinism and the position of Trotsky and the Trotskyists.

The main events of the emergence of Stalin and the crushing of Trotsky were outlined. Alan R said that Trotskyists were still functioning and I volunteered to send off for further information. He didn't think that a good idea but we did have quite alot of discussion. There are a number of books about WW2 where people describe being informed about politics by the Army Bureau for Current affairs. It still seems a curious contradiction to be educated in political theory by a body strongly committed to keeping things as there are. Later on , when I read about the role of the Army in the English Civil War, I think I understood more of what went on. Anyway, I must have been a good student because I passed the exams to add two more subjects to my GCE list.

Fellow conscripts

The other influence was my fellow conscripts, particularly a boy from a school teacher's family in Leamington Spa, George Michael, or "Spud" Taylor. He was much more sophisticated than me and had much wider knowledge. We discussed a wide range of subjects both in the Modern History class, and out of it. He did convert me to the Labour Party and opened up my mind to a whole variety of ideas. I had always been a vociferous reader but my imagination took off as a result of the group arguments at that air force station.

I was to meet Spud again in London after a few years, we shared rooms and more experience, then he moved into domesticity and probable obscurity in Corby or some such place.

I moved stations to Northwood, where I met up with two characters called Terry Burton and Harry Coleman. We made up a small gang of politicians and they both appear again in this story. For me, I was demobbed in 1959 into a teacher training college but not before another chance meeting transformed my life.

Into politics

On a train back from Broadstairs, I was reading *Tribune*, at that time a vigorous Left Labour weekly paper. A bloke in the carriage began to talk about politics and by the end of the journey we had exchanged addresses. It turned out that Brian Lynham was politically active in youth and revolutionary groups in West London where I was to be in college.

So it was that I was launched into revolutionary politics in 1960. Before this I had joined the local Labour Party and gone out canvassing for votes on at least one occasion. I remember this session well for the different receptions I got at two houses at the back of Broadstairs. At the first I was ferociously ordered off the property by a vicar's wife for even daring to suggest that they vote Labour, while the second house was occupied by a miners family from the Kent pits who were very pleased to see me. Talk about uneven development!

Brian was in the *Socialist Review [SR]* group in Notting Hill and had been visiting the small group in Ramsgate around Tony Young when we met. *SR* had been set up in 1950 when a small number of Trotskyists in the UK had decided that those saying the Soviet Union was not a degenerated workers state, but rather a new formation of state based capitalism, were right. This breach with official Trotskyism, dominated by the Socialist Workers Party of the USA and with Jock Haston's Revolutionary Communist Party in this country, resulted in a new group which Ian Birchall records numbered 33 at first [Birchall]. The national secretary for some of this time was teacher Stan Newens, later MP and Euro MP. *SR* published a small monthly journal and maintained a dozen or so branches. It was to become the International Socialists and later Socialist Workers Party.

The first issue that I still have of the *SR* is from August 1960. Some impression of the size can be shown from the following facts gleaned from those early editions. A Fighting Fund had been set up - a steal from the CPGB's *Daily Worker* - for the £40 required for each issue. From the published figures, it seems there were 13 sources which sent in amounts of £2 to £6 per month, and there was usually a shortfall. The money came, presumably from branches, in Hackney, Shoreditch, Notting Hill, Camden Town, Manchester, Lewisham, Harrow, Ramsgate, Holborn, Chigwell [?], Liverpool, Islington and Epping.

Articles in the *SR* and the theoretical journal *International Socialism* are signed by Ken Coates, Henry Collins, Stan Bedwell [Sid Bidwell ?], Tony C and "C Dallas", John Ashdown, "John Wilkes" probably a pen name for Ray Challinor, Jim Higgins [but he also wrote as James R Higgins], Richard Green, John Fairhead, Alistair MacIntyre, Mike Kidron, R, John Palmer, Eric S Heffer, Bob Pennington, Tony Young, John Phillips, or person B,C,D, and so on. The articles were usually on current issues like nuclear disarmament, Labour Party matters or a good percentage of industrial reports. That first issue of the *SR* that I bought had the headlines "A Blow against the Boss is a Blow against the Bomb", for example, or was it the other way round ?

I soon took to staying with Brian in Notting Hill, or the South Paddington Constituency Labour party as it was. Meetings were usually in a pub but I can only remember a few comrades. John Fairhead, some sort of educationalist who I heard finally went mad, and Jimmy Plant who was also a member of the Socialist Labor or Workers Party of the USA. . . Another associate from this times was Jafar Kareem, an educational psychologist who died in the 1990's and who got a full obituary in *The Guardian*. I believe his sister Nasreem married Jimmy, they moved to Bishops Stortford where Jimmy set up *Redline* for distributing SLP papers and various small booklets from left sources

I was great friends with Brian at that time. As well as living at his place, I was active with him in the LP, YS and SR. He was later to be the best man at my wedding and before that, went with Jafar and me on a holiday hitch hiking around Scotland. We stayed with YS comrades in Glasgow and for a few days slept in railway carriages at the depot at Dumbarton on Loch Lomond. One morning we overslept and when the train pulled in at the first station, passengers came pouring in. The surprise was mutual . . .

Into the madhouse

Brian then moved to Luton and worked under an assumed name, Brian O'Neill. He had joined the Revolutionary Workers Party [Trotskyist] British Section of the IV International, whatever that was, and a bulletin, car workers RED FLAG, demanded the usual better organisation in Vauxhall in response to his sacking in December 1969.

Later still, he came up to my bookshop in Coventry. At that time he was continuing his association with the Posadists group whose politics, it seems, was to advocate the Third World War because the first two had resulted in Soviet Russia and China. This was clearly nonsense and was designed, I imagine, to keep people away from the group, which it appeared functioned as an intelligence collecting agency

I stayed with him for a few days while searching for accommodation in London in 1984 and all he seemed to do was attend meetings and demonstrations, and note down attendances. It was from this I concluded it was some intelligence gathering agency for the KGB - or even CIA. There seemed no other logic to it. I understand about the extensive police infiltration into left wing organisations - and I've got my own suspicions as to exactly who - but this type of exercise does go on as we know.

Still learning

Anyway back in 1959, I was learning very rapidly. One entry in my notebooks in 1959 or early 1960 reveals -

"Presumably, I'm a Marxist, though after my talk with Jimmy Plant this evening, this seems a simple decision to deciding which sort of Marxist. Trotskyist, Socialist Labour League, scientific Marxist, etc." This long entry ended with a question "How about this for an article for SR?" It is clear from reading it that I still considered the Soviet Union a socialist state, so it would have been rejected had I submitted it.

I stayed in West London for 3 years, two in college and one living locally. This varied from living in the basement of the Chelsea Labour Party Rooms to a shared flat with Spud in Earls Court. For this whole period I was active in the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Labour Party Young Socialists and later the International Socialists. Additionally I was working within the teacher training college during my stay there and I begin by dealing with that.

A student

The College of S Mark and S John was in the Kings Road, Chelsea, at that time, and I had typically been directed there by the church secondary school I had attended. I was not been active in student politics, though a leading intellectual in the SR, Nigel Harris, had been an officer in the National Association of Labour Student Organisations. Even when I subsequently became a student again in 1972 to 1974, I was not involved. There always seemed so much else to be dealing with.

Back in 1959, this was not the time of mass sit-ins, but I was able to do a small amount and set up a Socialist Society. We mainly held meetings and I told the group I had met a really great socialist who was a brilliant speaker as well. So it was that Tony Cliff came to speak in 1960 to a small audience of 3 or 4. I had met Cliff at SR meetings and been impressed by his views and the forceful way he put them over. One college student Martin Pike, spoke enthusiastically about Cliff but nothing much happened.

If a cadre is someone who can operate politically alone, I think I qualified during this 18 month period.

Two of the lecturers are worth a mention. Our history teacher Steven Hargreaves was a smoker and got lung cancer. I visited him in the nearby S Stephen's Hospital but was disgusted by the cavalier attitude of my fellow students who cheerfully wished him a quick recovery. But he knew the truth and I always remember him peacefully reading a book about death. Frank Coles did educational theory and had been a Stalinist in the thirties. He had taught in East London at the same school as Michael Stewart, the MP and Cabinet Minister, who mentions him in his autobiography. He was an impressive person and claimed to have sold the *Daily Worker*, despite abuse, at Ascot railway station in the distant past. He was a perceptive teacher and despaired at making me one. However my interests were far from wanting to be a good teacher and I was active outside the college.

Against nuclear weapons

I had become active in Banning the Bomb, or CND, while still doing my National Service or the first year in college. My memory and notebooks are unclear on this point - it could have be Easter 1959 or 1960. I went on the Aldermaston March and teamed up with a teacher Laurie Webb from a Ramsgate secondary modern school, Hearson. I don't recall many details but I think I went all the way, sleeping in church halls and culminating with the mass rally in Trafalgar Square. The final day of the marches came to be huge affair with the centre of London at a standstill.

I reported back to the Thanet CND meeting soon after, saying how many working class people I had seen. This provoked a response from Tony Young, an SR comrade who said the trouble with CND was that it was not working class enough. Tony had been in the SLL and I think some of it still stayed on. Anyway a good debate ensured and another contact was made. Later Tony was to act as my solicitor for conveyancing purposes and we remained in contact until I left for Coventry.

While in Chelsea, I was active in the local group. Dominated by the same middle class activists as in the Chelsea LP, including Mrs Blackett, wife of the eminent Professor P.M.S, the group was very active. The equation of middle class and consistent activity was frequently observed in CND. We went to Aldermaston like everybody else, met weekly and held local demos. I went to the committee as college delegate which gave me some sort of status.

We had a speaker to the Chelsea YS on nuclear disarmament, the aforementioned Michael Stewart, the Labour MP for Fulham. He had been highly recommended by Frank Coles, a lecturer at my college, who described Stewart as "a saint". In Widgery's book, he is referred to as a Left winger but by now, he had become a more earthy right winger and put the Gaitskill line of multi lateral, not unilateral, disarmament. I thanked him

for his speech, we had a discussion and the vote was 9 to 1 against him. His sole supporter was Maureen James, of whom more later.

Marriage and events

In 1962 Maureen and I moved to Islington. She was pregnant with David and a quick ceremony was arranged. Her family found some money for a deposit on a flat.

Jim Cronin had put a card in the local newsagent to recruit members and I replied. The group, which was quite large, was soon meeting weekly in our small and sparsely furnished flat. The nature of the group meant that we were more able to act politically. We were always trying to broaden out the politics and it may well have been partly as a result that a member "Lucky" John Apostolou was involved in a police case that had quite momentous results.

Police malpractice - and discovered !

In July 1963, he had been on protest with 2 friends at the visit to UK of the Greek queen Fredericka. So had the cartoonist Donald Room. All four were arrested after scuffles and a policeman planted 4 half bricks among their possessions. Forensic evidence by Room's solicitor showed a complete absence of brick dust in any of their pockets and they were eventually cleared and paid hundreds of pounds in "compensation", that is no admission of police guilt, just money to buy victims off.

This was the first case exposing the activities of Detective Sergeant Challenor of the plain clothes squad at West End Central station. After much investigation, he was found to be "insane" but three other officers got 3 year sentences. Subsequently I have often wondered about the sanity of policemen but rarely seen prison sentences.

See also *The Raven 22* ref this case

The impact of the cases were colossal. By the 1990's it had been widely accepted that the police plant evidence, or withhold it, or misuse it. From the Birmingham 6 to the Bridgewater Farm case, the examples are legion. Equally widespread are the cases of corruption. A local station at Stoke Newington regularly kills innocent people and plants "drugs" on many more. The West Midlands Crime squad had got too much even for the self monitoring thugs in blue and was disbanded. The Greek Queen case was path breaking in a society still believing in the *Dixon of Dock Green* myth. It set the pattern for others to follow except that in those days criminal policemen were punished not promoted like today.

The other interesting element was that it publicised the Gregory Lambrakis case. He had been a Labour type MP in Greece and had been murdered by various state agencies and the fascists - a sort of dry run for the assassination of John Kennedy in the US later on that year. Lambrakis was to be the subject of the book and film "Z" but in the meanwhile the fact that Donald Room was holding a placard saying "*Lambrakis R.I.P.*" was bad publicity for the Greek dictators, and fascists, and their equivalent in

the UK police. I've got no idea what happened to Lucky eventually, but it was exciting while it was going on [Griggs]. Room remains on active duty.

Constitutional matters

The second area of activity at this time was the Labour Party and the Young Socialists. I had worked hard in the 1959 election for the Labour candidate in nearby Putney, one Dick Taverne who subsequently defected to the Liberals. The local Labour party was composed of middle class people plus a very few active youngsters. I had been briefly in the South Paddington YS, at the same time, I think.

Young Socialists

It was decided to set up a Young Socialist branch and I became the Chair of this. The Secretary was a Communist Party supporter, just one of many CP entrists, Richard Maybin who was, much later, to establish himself as a NALGO/UNISON activist in Havering. He was said to be the key activist in the Kent CP from his base in Chatham, and have links with the Communists among the Kent miners. He was even later to become the Chair of the CPB when the CPGB fragmented.

Most of the other members were local schoolboys, a majority of whose parents were servants to the families at the posh end of the borough. There were a few from the working class end, including Maureen James who was to become my wife. I was politically the leader, though no others shared my revolutionary politics.

I was become the Secretary of the West London Federation of the YS, but owing to a balls up in the elections, the committee was run by the Socialist Labour League [SLL] supporters in *Keep Left* [KL]. Roger Protz was the local leader of this particular group. They were our mortal enemies and I was in fact a prisoner of the majority. It is worth considering the framework of the YS and its component parts.

The organisation

YS had been set up to capture the huge numbers of young people who were keen to *Ban the Bomb* in CND. In previous generations, the YS had been infiltrated, most effectively by the CPGB with Ted Willis of Tottenham, the playwright, and so on, in the 1930's [Willis] Youth sections are always a problem for the Labour Party whose main function is to make a lot of fuss about political issues but do very little except rationalise things. The young people are impatient and want to see something actually done.

Trotskyist infiltration

So it was that the SLL and their newspaper *Keep Left* were to dominate this generation of the YS. It was hardly surprising because the SLL had been established to take the vast numbers who left the CP over Hungary in 1956. For some years it had managed to persuade the dissidents that *Newsletter* was a real rank and file paper and, though it had by now become an open

journal for this most destructive of Trotskyist groups, it's organisation was still strong. The first YS Conference had been a dramatic affair with the editor of the official YS paper *New Advance*, Roger Protz, defecting in the Conference Hall to the SLL. He had up to this point been non political, and he too will figure again in this story.

The SLL were able to mount a very strong challenge to the LP and the right wing section of the YS. With their new capture, and the widespread organisation, they also added a particularly concentrated form of selling their paper. This they did regularly and with a religious fervour that was bound to bring results in the short term.

Socialist nuclear bombs ?

Their politics were the weak point. Orthodox Trotskyism held that the "workers bomb" of the USSR was justifiable, despite the fact that it's use would have destroyed the world's working class. So *Keep Left* supported Russian nuclear weapons, and there was a nice photo of them voting with the right wing against nuclear disarmament. Their theory also featured the imminent collapse of capitalism, and indeed had done since 1945 as they extended Trotsky's pre war writings to the indefinite future. This again made them easy targets. Finally their internal democracy was a joke, reflecting almost exactly the Stalinism that they so aggressively attacked.

Our alternative

All this should have meant that our position would soon overhaul them. The SR comrades like myself had set up a youth paper *Rebel* in July of 1960, a small very basic journal printed by the 'in house' SR publisher, St Martin's Press at 86d Lillie Road, SW6. It was subtitled *For Socialist Youth Against the Bomb* and cost 3d, that is three pence in old pre decimal money, or 1p today.

Rebel's original contact name and address was Mary Bristowe, later Phillips, at 75 Cromwell Ave., N6, who has remained active all her life. Later Brian Lynam took over this role, using Jimmy Plant's address at 3 Moorhouse Road W2. The paper was published by individual members of about 16 YS branches and Thanet YCND. The programme was unilateral disarmament, self determination of colonial people, nationalisation under workers control, votes at 18, comprehensive schools and the return of a Labour Government pledged to the above. Very simple.

The main articles were anti the Bomb and NATO, the Belgian general strike, the Press by me, theatre and colonialism etc. There were two letters from Chelsea YS, one from Jimmy Plant and an article by Alan Richardson, of whom more later.

There was a round up of news from YS branches, which leant heavily on 'our' branches at South Paddington, Ramsgate, with my old friend Micky Thompson at 7 Nixon Ave., and SE London groups like Eltham, Bill Vester, and Will Fancy. *Rebel* readers meetings were usually held at the *King and Queen* pub in the Harrow Road, W2, on a Saturday night.

Curiously, slips about meetings were printed in the large print telegraph style, as Brian was working in telegraphy at the time.

I have copies, some multiple, of all the nine editions that were published except one. Number 9 announced "Rebel Must Go" and details of the new *Young Guard*, out 1 September 1961. My documentation also includes minutes of the first *Rebel* Editorial Board, taken by Maureen James. Myself and Maureen, John and Mary Phillips, Chris Davison and Jenny Spencer, Brian, Will, Bill, and someone called John Curry, who is unidentified, attended the EB. Later incarnations of *Rebel* were in 1966, at least 6 editions, and from November 1971. These were rather lifeless compared to previous versions.

The rest

Meanwhile back in 1961 were many other YS papers of which I have some copies. The Trotskyists around the Revolutionary Socialist Leagues had *Rally for Socialism* based on Nottingham and Liverpool in 1961 and later in 1963/4 *Youth for Socialism*. This was concurrent with *Young Guard*.

A right wing character, PR and all, called Christopher J Cowling published at least two editions of *Strident, the Voice of Progressive Youth*, from the W2 area. He also later, 1962, published *Counterblast* from Fulham which featured a big plug for the CIA funded *Encounter*, news of an up and coming MP, W J Rogers, and an advert for the Fabian Society. A possible relative Ivan Cowling published a comic style *Flaming Brasier*, very lightweight, from Clapham

The Independent Labour Party published *New Generation*; the British Socialist Sunday Schools came up with *The Young Socialist - for the Young in years and at Heart*. Regional papers include *Labour Youth* from Coventry at what was to be Dave Nellist's address in Coundon, an Islington comic style *Outlaw*, and the SE Essex YS journal edited by Ken Worpole, Chair of Hadleigh YS, called *Forward*. I also have many copies of the official Labour *New Advance* from these years, both pre and post Protz.

Events

But back to the main story. The IS as it was to become, had joined with the Revolutionary Socialist League [RSL] to form *Young Guard*, featuring Angus MacDonald from Glasgow, Malcolm Tallentyre from London and so on. It was to run from 1961 to 1966 for which I have copies of virtually all 39 editions, and possibly beyond that. In fact I have numerous unsold copies, some from Chris Hill, of whom more later. From edition 13, the size was doubled and the print style much improved.

Young Guard

A draft pamphlet on YG - "the independent monthly paper of the Young Socialists" - outlines the historical details of the YS and goes on to explain the structure of YG. It says this is unique. Supporters who pay 2/6 or half a crown or 12.5p in new money, every month have autonomy over "sales distribution, etc" and elect delegates to a quarterly meeting of the National

EB. 30 to 40 delegates attend but the meetings are open. This decides the content for the next three months and elects a Working EB of five who carry out the decisions.

The aims which could be altered by a majority vote were said to be broadly in line with YS Conference decisions. They were the same as those of *Rebel*, see above, but included two paragraphs on International Policy, writing off the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Internationals. The case of Russia showed the pitfalls of socialism in one country. The demand for comprehensive education was replaced by ones demanding free access to higher education, flexible apprenticeships, full trade union rights and the end of blind alley employment. The return of a Labour government, etc, was also excluded, but a clause added that called for the building of a democratic YS, working with the YS in other countries.

Articles or letters in YG were by the old *Rebel* group plus Roger Cox, John Lane, Paul Foot, John Palmer, Ron Bailey, Pat Sutherland,, Keith Dickinson, Gus MacDonald, Dave Ablitt, Mike Heym, Mike Coggins, an Ilford nurse [probably Nessie Young], John Charlton, Chris Harmon, Dave Spillsbury, June Lester, Stuart Christie [?] Ian Mooney, John Strauther, Ian Birchall , S Mani, Julian Atkinson, Jim Cronin, Ross Pritchard, Roger Rosewell [!], Marion Higgins, Fred Lindop and Tessa Mundy, Mike Caffoor, Dave Percival, Chris Gray, Peter Bain, Pete Gold, Ian Craib, Paul Coysh, Jim Scott, Roger Protz, Bob Cartwright and many others.

Chris Davison was the first editor, Monica Foot did Design and Keith Dickinson was Business manager. The original EB was Barry Burke, John Palmer and Gus MacDonald. Pat Sutherland was added and the EB substantially extended in the autumn of 1963. Gus MacDonald became editor but was replaced by Fred Lindop in December 1964. Finally in 1966 Mike Caffoor was editor.

Clashes

London YG readers meetings stick in my memory for two things. First the endless droning voices of RSL activists like Keith Dickinson repeating the slogans that made up most of the their politics. Secondly the disputes I had with Gus MacDonald. I had first come across him at the YS Conference where I sat just in front of him. He occupied three spaces and spread out his documents, making frequent interjections in the business.

He had been very active in the Glasgow apprentices strike with such well known people as Billy Connolly and Alex Ferguson, and lesser known print worker Ross Pritchard. Associated with the Selbyite political group, he later came down to London as an IS full timer. He married Teeny, the daughter of the Labour Party agent in Hackney. His career progressed from a sewing machine mechanic to journalist on *Tribune*. He later featured in *World in Action* and made a successful management career in television, mainly in Scotland. Finally he was brought in as a wealthy business man to be Blair's Minister of transport, Lord MacDonald.

His point at YG meetings was that there was too much "old thinking" by comrades in general, and me in particular, about the way to socialism. What was needed was a 'new approach', and I think I see what he meant. Seriously though, his point about traditional thinking had little validity as we were active in the big anti war movement, though we did little about the industrial struggle which was carried on in workplaces anyway. If he meant that we had no power or influence in broader political matters, this has been the classical dilemma that has prompted activists into participation schemes and the like. Though minor gains may be won, they are unrecognised and the end result is the management always take over the innovators, and use them to their advantage. His case is a prime example.

An appearance

One interesting feature of his later rise in television may have been his appearance with my partner Maureen in a religious series about *Love, Sex and Marriage*, shown on Sunday evenings in 1962 in *ABC's Sunday Break*. Gus was there with Teeny, with other comrades - Maureen, a print worker John Shield and one Alan Richardson, lecturer in sociology and later to be a councillor on Haringey Council. They made up about half the panel of "typical teenagers". I still have the photo

More on in-fighting

The YG comrades were much smaller but had the advantage of a wider recruiting field in the Youth CND, which the SLL denounced as middle class. In fact we did make some progress as in West London but they kept their majority on the National Executive until the Labour Party closed the lot down. *KL* kept going even then for a number of years .

The idea of forming *Young Guard* with other revolutionary socialists was an extension of the idea of entryism, or entrism, into the Labour Party. Because of the circumstances, of very quick growth, loose organisation, etc., it was possible to get over revolutionary ideas and make recruits to the Party. We were able to hold office, make proposals and challenge the politics of both official social democracy and Trotskyism.

The IS Group did recruit and the paper sales did expand. The idea however was based on the concept of deliberately working within a social democratic party to build the revolutionary group, then to leave or be thrown out, after a relatively short time span. Our partners in YG, the RSL, began to operate the tactic of deep entrism, that is really digging in and trying to actually influence the LP. This is a tactic doomed to fail , as many previous secret pressure groups had found.

The Militant group, as the RSL became known, carried through their tactic for many years. They did build areas of support in many areas, notably Liverpool. It was all based on the false idea that it was possible to make the LP a socialist organisation. Though the *Militant* group did achieve some success and managed to get many working class activists into the

struggle , eventually they were bound to collapse. After many years of harrying by LP and union leaders, this happened. Their performance in the Poll tax campaign and statements to identify the "ringleaders" to the police after the Trafalgar Square poll tax "riots" didn't help.

A false step

Deep entrism is not a practical possibility, and the proper attitude to social democrats is the United Front. This is working alongside them in matters of joint interest, putting revolutionary ideas and practice into comparison with theirs. This does not involve the surrender of independence that results from both entrism and often the similar Popular Front. Campaigns on issues like racism or unpopular laws or social conditions are suitable for the united front, and one such example was the Haringey Tenants rents struggle which we were to run in 1967.

The UF was in practice for some decades before WW1 and was subsequently formulated and fitted into a theory about building the forces of socialism by the Bolshevik leaders in 1920's.

A point about different tactics here - the Popular Front does not originate in the politics of the Third International set up after the successful soviet revolution of 1917. It was to emerge in the degeneration of the soviet regime with the consolidation of the new state capitalism. It was a tactic foisted on the various Communist Parties as Stalin sought desperately for allies against Hitler, an alliance with literally anyone who would oppose the NAZI's.

In the process, the CP's abandoned their own position and any plans for revolution. This tactic was partly responsible for the defeat of the revolutionary working class in Spain. The Popular Front tactic was to characterise the CP's the whole world over in their long decline into oblivion. It was the sign of their degeneration from a distorted form of revolutionary socialism to open reformism. The collapse in 1990 was rooted in this change.

Going east

Our move to Islington was a big change. The borough was solidly Labour and the CLP reflected this. Racism was everywhere and the East Islington party in particular was constantly fighting off the anti racists. The YS was very much the same except that the *Keep Left* group not as strong in East London. . Our little branch in South West Islington had as members Angus Calder who was to become a lecturer in Social History, and metalworking apprentice Frank Gorton who went to Canada and came back married and an Orthodox Trotskyist. His wife was active some years afterwards. A comrade, Jim Cronin, was in the branch but also later Chair of the East London Federation.

The political party

The final area of my activity was within the SR, later IS. My initial experience had been in the Notting Hill branch where I had come across

the paper but had not been very successful in selling it. I was to join the Islington branch, which was a much more organised outfit.

Jim already knew Tony Cliff and his partner Chanie Rosenberg but had lost contact, it seems. Having grown up in Islington he knew a lot of people and was able to drag some of them along. From the YS and the YCND, I was able to take groups of people up to the IS meetings that were held at Tony Cliff's house near the Arsenal stadium. Maureen came along too, I think we had a baby sitter after David was too big to cart around in a carry cot.

The IS group meeting was quite large, people came from South London to attend. The attendance at meetings was around 20, when the notional total membership of the Group was only around 200. Two members stood out, Stan Mills, a railwayman and Jean Tait who was a long standing member. There was usually business and the speaker was the big attraction. The political level of all us new members was low and Cliff often went into overdrive

I remember one hectic occasion when the discussion came round to charity. Cliff ferociously denounced it as a non-solution while some of the younger comrades could see nothing wrong with it. A long row followed. I intervened pointing out that charity as a political policy was indeed useless and probably fraudulent but that as individuals, there was nothing wrong in making donations. I think that socialists should be the first people to put their hands into their pockets when money is being collected, because you can then point out the contradiction of charity collections in a world so rich as we are. It also prepares for when you are trying to collect from other people for strikes and suchlike, you can't be accused of hypocrisy.

There were always good debates. There was no ready supply of socialist literature available apart from IS papers and Cliff's book on the USSR. For many years, many members including myself had a limited theoretical knowledge, though some IS group members were remarkably well informed. I refer to John Phillips, who was for years the national secretary.

Members meetings

The organisation also held regular aggregates for all members where there was a concentrated day or so of basic theory. I always found them interesting because I was normally very busy chasing up things on a daily basis. I was active in the union too, and there were domestic duties as well, though I probably was as much of a male chauvinist as many others in this respect.

My chief recruit for the meetings at Chatterton Road was John Lane, from *Solidarity*, the "Marxist anarchists", as they were described, in fact libertarian marxists. He had packed up studying Maths at Oxford and joined the working class as a tube worker. He later became a lecturer in

Maths at Birmingham and probably elsewhere, but we were good friends for some years.

Solidarity for workers power

The origins of *Solidarity* lie in the coming together of at least three groups. Perhaps the largest was those who had left the CPGB in 1956/7 and then been active in the *Newsletter*. When this was revealed as an SLL front, the majority left and formed a new organisation in 1960. Ken Weller is perhaps typical of these and he was for years a leading member. These were generally working class activists. Secondly there were plenty of anarchists, or anarcho-syndicalists who provided a libertarian set of ideas to counter balance the marxism of the first group. Their influence can be seen in the federation structure of the organisation for the first eight years. Finally there were small groups of workers council communists, basically non Leninist Marxists, who did not have a national identity.

Solidarity groups functioned autonomously and published their own newsletters, though the Central/ North London one was by far the most productive and its journal, of the same name, was widely circulated around other groups. Terry Burton already mentioned, was a member of the Tunbridge group but wrote at least one article for the London journal. The problem was that I only occasionally saw the paper, though their one off specials on subjects like *Spies for Peace*, were widely sold. I did agree with their politics but there seemed no local organisation to relate to, otherwise I could well have joined. There was a big overlap of membership anyway, dating back, apparently, to Seymour Papert an early *Socialist Review* member. Later I bought up back copies to complete my collection of the paper that finally ceased publication in 1992. I got to know Ken Weller quite well in later years. Chris Pallis was the other main leader.

Solidarity published eighty odd issues in their first series and thirty odd in their second. Apart from the main series, there were some local publications. They also published specialist series like the one on car workers and one off pamphlets on Vietnam, the homeless, Greece, Belgium, anti war issues and so on. Books were written on Workers Control and the Russian Revolution, Hungary 56 and Paris 68, all of which were brilliant.

One of their problems was they concentrated too much on publications and not enough on organisation. They also leant rather heavily on the politics on Cornelius Castoriadis also known as Paul Cardan and Pierre Chaulieu. When he finally defected in 1992, the heart seemed to go out of *Solidarity* and it finally ceased publication. This was a tragedy for its brand of 'marxist anarchism', though the title would no doubt be repudiated, was an extremely valuable contribution to the cause of revolutionary socialists.

The national membership of the IS at this time was low and there were branches in main cities with students as the overwhelming majority. I recall putting up on the floor of our Islington flat, one student from Leeds University who came down to London for a meeting. He didn't say much, but then he has never been a big conversationalist even as editor of *Socialist Worker*. I am referring to Chris Harman who died in 2009. Later I was to know another Leeds student, Chris Hill, who was to live with us in Tottenham. Mike Heym made up the triumvirate.

At this time I was reading avidly and filling up a series of notebooks every year with notes on activity, reviews and ideas for articles. I even wrote the occasional short poem, though of the modern, non rhyming type. I went to the theatre but not regularly, mainly the Royal Court at Sloane Square. I was concerned about pop culture and read a lot of Raymond Williams, though it's all gone now. As I had become politically more active the nature of the entries change. There are more practical notes on the YS, or action with Young Teachers. Perhaps the material will be of use when individual issues are looked at in depth.

So this was the picture up to 1964 when we moved to Tottenham, which was another centre of IS group activity. My second son Peter was born within days of our arrival, and it was to prove a home base for me, and the scene of a big expansion in political activity. My perception of the ISG at the time did not include any analysis about libertarianism or the problems of marxist organisation. This was to follow. My belief in the people who were around me was strong and remained so for many years

The prime mover

Perhaps this is an appropriate point to say something about founder of the IS group, while fuller paragraphs are in the last chapter. Tony Cliff, [1917 - 2000], was a unique political activist, 100% committed to his self defined task of building 'the revolutionary party'. His career began in what we know as Israel, progressed through illegal activity into trotskism, stayed with that philosophy on moving to Britain in 1946 and launched into transforming a small 'independent' activists group into the Bolshevik model organisation. Hence the British Socialist Review group became the International Socialists - from 1962 - and finally the Socialist Workers Party, from 1977. Over the years his group recruited a talented and enormously effective membership - and his enterprise was another chance to establish that illusive and possible extinct animal, the leninist party. Cliff was personally charismatic, a dictator in practice, extremely capable and articulate, and attracting personal loyalty on a grand scale.

Born Ygael Gluckstein he acquired numerous political names but most consistently as Tony Cliff, His family still use the family names and carry on his work. His biography written by someone too close to him and too closely defined has now appeared. This book is extremely well researched and presented, took seven years to prepare, yet because of

the points mentioned above, can so easily be categorised as a Party document, just following the Party line [Birchall] .

It would not be overstating the case to say that I subsequently realised that the IS/SWP was the last , and best chance , for the leninist revolutionary party. Its membership was very talented and committed , the external situation could hardly have been more favourable. WE shall see how it failed to reach its target.

This chapter recalls the events of my living in West London , in college, and in Islington. I had become politically active in the Labour Party YS and YCND, and later in the SR or IS from 1961 or thereabouts. There are also some outlines of political groupings.

This chapter looks at the political activities of the years 1964 to the end of the decade, such as tenants work, and looks ahead chronologically to similar issues. The political and economic background of the North East London borough is examined. There is a further description of IS organisation and of key members in the local branch.

Moving into Tottenham was not carefully planned, though I was aware of it as a centre of Young Socialist activity. It was just that there were cheap houses for sale in the borough. Tottenham has Roman origins, as Ermine Street it seems, with the High Road being divided up at the intervals coinciding with the boundary limits of retirement estates of Roman centurions. It has developed around the main road, the railways and the River Lea, and got its industrial development from the workshops moving out of the City. It is a partly an example of ribbon development, running along the Roman road that makes up the High Road from Stamford Hill to Edmonton. [Protz]

In the post war period, the employment in the Lea Valley industrial area led to a veneer of modest affluence. The new Victoria Line tube resulted in even more modest gentrification. Recent events have marked a change of fortune. Though still a "red suburb", high unemployment due to de industrialisation has resulted in widespread poverty. There is a large black population with extra high unemployment, and the Broadwater Farm protest against police violence in 1985 was predictable.

In the early 1960's, there was a substantial group of political activists in the LP, YS CND and so on. The IS also had a toe hold. Out of the numbers of people involved in political activity there were to emerge a core of party comrades who were by and large to remain members of the IS - SWP for some decades.

Tottenham had been a place characterised by both a strong LP and, because of the presence of large scale industry, of workplace unionism and Communist Party of Great Britain. During the war and the following years, there was a shop stewards action committee at Tottenham Hale on the Lea with representatives from furniture, printing and engineering factories. The Lebus furniture works acted as a leader both in local wage rates and political matters [Moss].

At the time, when labour was scarce, shop stewards pushed up pay by sectional negotiations, which were in turn the basis of claims by other shop stewards. When furniture was in great demand, the Lebus stewards set the local rate not just for their own trade but also for engineering and other workers. The huge factory, right on the River Lea Canal, was well represented on the national executive of the union and local trades union councils. Active members went out to organise in other areas and provide union full time officers or FTO's.

Factories like Gestetners, Dickinson's, Keith Blackmans [Seadon], Lorrilleux and Bolton dominated the employment scene. Just to the North, the extensive industrial areas of Brimsdown, Ponders End and the Cambridge Road (A10) were easily reached. This was said to be the second largest industrial zone in London, based on the war time arms economy boom [Lewis].

The Labour influence

The expansion of unions at the workplace and the impact of communist ideology had led to the activists becoming an important element in the local LP. Though the key union people were largely members of the CP, a whole layer of shop stewards and officers joined up and ran their LP Wards. There was a steady influx of activists from local workplaces. These people tended to be keen members for a year or two before realising the powerlessness of the ordinary members, not just at the hands of the national parliamentary leadership, but also the local councillors and the local Party bureaucracy.

The leading steward at Gestetners was Richard or Dick Goldstein of the Socialist Labour League. He was on the AEU District Committee with Alan Watts where they had an mixed relationship. Goldstein was later to become the National Secretary of the SLL's All Trade Union Alliance, a sort of Trotskyist alternative the Communist Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. He was also critical in the later break-up of the SLL.

Tottenham Communists as well

The CPGB had a policy of infiltrating the LP for some time. As previously stated, Ted Willis, later Lord Ted, from Tottenham had led the national CPGB assault on the YS in the 1930's, but the CPGB had a powerful influence on the Tottenham LP [Willis]. In the early 1950's, Tottenham LP had fought strongly against the LP leadership on the question of German Re-armament, a touchstone of CP policy. It was a vigorous left wing party, with some IS members participating in its affairs as well.

By 1964, history of entrism was repeating itself. This time the intruders in the YS were the SLL's *Keep Left*. Sheila Torrance and Richard Goldstein were in charge and our group, the IS, were as a whole smaller. My own involvement in the YS at this time was virtually nil. We lived in the North Tottenham and Wood Green constituency, and had an arrangement that my partner Maureen would go to the Wood Green YS with Jim Cronin who was lodging with us in Seymour Avenue. At this time, I went along to the local LP Ward where Ian Birchall also attended. Here the complaint was that we were bring politics into the LP!

Of course politics were the preserve of the MP. The MP's for Tottenham had a honourable record but the Alan Brown incident was an unfortunate lapse. He had been elected in 1959 as a strong left winger but had for some unexplained reason defected to the right soon after the election. For five years the local LP could only rage at being "represented" by a Tory - as

good a case as any for the re-call ability of MP's. Brown died in a south coast hotel in equally unexplained circumstances some years later.

Norman Dinning, a big wheel in the local party, was sent up to Manchester to get a reliable union person for the next election. Norman Atkinson from the huge Metropolitan Vickers plant, was selected and eventually replaced the Tory . He remained an MP until replaced by Bernie Grant, one of the better "black for white" arrangements. An example of the worst kind was in neighbouring Hackney where the life long AEU activist, Ernie Roberts, was kicked out to install a middle class black woman, Diane Abbott. Norman Atkinson subsequently worked doing research in engineering, I understand.

Revolutionary Communist Party

Dinning incidentally was one of several local members of the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party that had rejected the war time electoral truce and kept the class war going at full pace. The others were Dennis Wing, another AEU member who had "run" Brimsdown power station, and Alan Winter who also worked at the Royal Small Arms factory with Norman Dinning. Finally there was Ted Corbett, who was convenor at Standard Telephone and Cables, STC, in Southgate. This factory had a long record of industrial action over many decades.

A neglected strike by black workers

Alan Watts has recorded one example of the industrial action at STC. He wrote that *"this was an interesting example of the power of the rank and file. It was a big deal, over race really. The West Indian workers in STC were not getting upgraded. Eventually they came out on strike but went back in pretty quickly. Several of us on the AEU District Committee were so appalled that I wrote a leaflet which we put in on the Saturday morning and they came out again on the Monday morning. They stayed out for eight weeks and won the dispute. It was highly successful. Richard R worked there, a supporter of Engineers Charter.*

"As an interesting aside, after I worked at Hallex but before going to MK, I got a job at STC. I turned up on Monday morning, only to be told that I couldn't have the job, and was kicked out on the spot. I sued them and got a week's pay because they had not informed me. So I was delighted when we were able to put the boot in later on, a little personal satisfaction" [Watts]

The political party

Meanwhile, modern "Trotskyism" was growing. As well as The SLL take over, the IS was expanding and before long the local group was meeting our house in Seymour Avenue. The core members previously mentioned were beginning to establish themselves. Among these, were myself and Maureen, and Jim and Liz. Jim's family had been involved in the Irish struggle and he had been in the YS and YCND in Islington. Liz's father was a life long CP-er with a massive collection of the works of Stalin. After

a long relationship, the two of them eventually married and Jim branched out from being a waged watchmaker to running his own business.

Later, Liz went off with Paul M, taking the two kids with her. Paul was associated with the May Day Manifesto group, one of those short lived organisations which characterise reformism. He was to follow a medical career in New Zealand, and later back in the UK as Registrar at the Maudsley Hospital.

Jim subsequently lived an exiting and extravagant life until he had heart trouble in the 1990's. He was active in the AEU and our fraction, the Engineers Charter, as well as being very active in party branches. Jim's two children by Liz, Laura and Anna went to New Zealand but still kept in touch. His other main partner, C, was an active if irregular party member and their daughter Ellie, a bright intelligent girl.

Ian Birchall had been a member in the branch at Oxford University that contained some eminent people - Richard Hyman, later a professor of Industrial Relations, Simon Petch who was to become the General Secretary of a Post Office union, Dave Peers national secretary of the IS, and so on. He came to Tottenham and soon teamed up with Norah, both were lecturers at a nearby college. Ian is a brilliant theoretician and at this time was the actual editor of *Labour Worker*, while Paul Foot was nominally in charge. He tended to get articles from people he knew and I was a regular contributor. Ian was a key comrade at the national level and has an encyclopaedic memory, as Tony Cliff's autobiography recalls.

In those days both Ian and I were active in the local Ward. We were able to raise some useful items in a small way. In 1966, Ian moved a motion protesting against the imprisoning of a Peruvian peasant leader Hugo Blanco, who may or may not have really existed, for the Ward members. The local ward, and the Constituency LP General Management Committee, had no knowledge or thoughts on the subject, and as far as I recall passed it without comment. We were to leave the LP in some style after a few years and take some members with us in a classic entrists way but for now it was the old routine meetings.

In these early years, Ian wrote important books on the French events of 1968, etc. He translated several books from French socialists and is an expert on Victor Serge. His partner Norah was also an active intellectual, contributing many articles to theoretical journals. She was a party member for over two decades. Her reasons for leaving are unclear but she remains in the 1990's a very active member of the lecturers' union. Their two sons Daniel and Martin were to follow different careers. Daniel went to university and was a member of the SWP at odd times. He worked in a publishing company. Martin was interested in music and spent much of his time in that milieu.

Alan Watts was at that time working in local factories, an AEU member. His partner, Diane Middleton was to be a keen participant in the debate on the party's women's paper *Women's Voice*. After some years membership, she left over this issue which is discussed in a later chapter. She took up a university course in mid life and followed a career in publishing. Alan was our ears in the local workforce and did help get some workplaces organised in Edmonton. He was in the party AEU fraction and the Engineers Charter. In his 40's he took a degree course, allegedly to brush up on his theoretical base, but he still worked as an engineer, fixing people's cars, even after completing this.

In the fire service

Terry S was employed as a fire-fighter, after some dead end jobs. With his wife Jean, he was living in rented rooms. They were soon to move out to Basildon where they got a decent house and regular visitors from London. The pay was so bad that Terry was involved in door to door selling. He soon became active in the union and went to Ruskin College, Oxford. For most union students Ruskin was the way out of their work and into a job as union FTO, or more honourably as a teacher. Terry returned to the job he left and progressed to the National Executive of the Fire Brigade Union.

In this position he was able to establish a base for revolutionary politics in the Region. The firefighters of East Anglia already had the benefit of an intelligent and socialist leadership of Bill Deal, a Labour Party member, and Terry built on that. I did a lot of educational work with them and the levels of union organisation and political activity were high, in what was seen by many as an unpromising area. It was to provide the general secretary following Ken Cameron, in Andy Gilchrist, of the Bedfordshire Brigade. Terry was later to get a doctorate from Essex University but his thesis on the history of the FBU is unpublished but for extracts [Bailey].

In the 1980's, Terry resisted pressure from the SWP leadership who were trying to get all SWP members to concentrate on political work as the labour movement swung strongly to the right. He was right in his action, and the Andy Gilchrist election as general secretary, for what it was worth, may never have happened without him.

Jean was to train as an infant teacher and took to living in Basildon with some enthusiasm. Their daughter Joanne became the TUC pensions expert in the 1990's. Their son Simon went into computers.

Terry finally became a TUS teacher at Tottenham College, CONEL from where he was sacked for being 65 years old then worked at the TUC for 2.5 yrs on the Pensions Champions project - promoting workplace union reps who could explain the different aspects of pensions to their colleagues

Christine G, later Protz, worked in a local office and was later to move into educational needs of travellers. She drifted to the right in the 1990's but

before that was to marry Roger Protz of YS fame. He was thrown out of the SWP in 1975 where he had for years been the editor of the *Socialist Worker*. He later found a niche for himself in CAMRA, the real ale organisation, and lives in "scumbagland" territory, in S. Albans. The story of the split in the IS is told later. Their daughter was very active in the environmental movement.

Mel and Gerry

Mel and Gerry make up the final members of the core. Mel did white collar work before becoming full time in the IS with the man who really built the organisation, Jim Nichol. Mel was to be the key financial administrator in the Party for many years, an extremely capable person. Gerry was also to work at the Centre before eventually becoming a legal secretary in Jim's law company. In 1964, Mel had become a labour councillor. He had close links with a lot of the local CP. He and Geraldine had recently married and their son Mark had been born soon afterward. They all lived with Mel's parents for a time until getting a house of their own close by.

There were some late arrivals to Tottenham. Mel and Gerry were great pals with Chris and Jenny D. Chris had joined the party even before I having been recruited, I believe, in Ramsgate by Tony Y. He had been active in the YS and was editor of *Young Guard*. Jenny had lived in Paddington where I had been with Brian Lynham. Her father was a Labour Alderman or senior councillor, I think, and she also had been in the YS. She worked as a teacher initially. Chris, always a loyal party member, was secretary of the London Shop Stewards Defence Committee, and edited bus worker publications early on. He worked full time for the party and eventually moved out to Enfield, then joined the outpost at Swanage in Dorset,, with Mel and Gerry. Later Fred L also moved there.

There were a few peripheral members. Peter G worked in Tottenham bus garage for a decade and has promised to write an account of this for the Haringey Trades Union Council history book. He was to die mysteriously of CBE in 2005. Rod C soon left and the whole family moved to Oxford, His father was a key LP member and Personnel Officer - apparently there was no perceived contradiction.

His friend, Matthew Burnside worked a dust man. Something of a loner, he took and sold 6 *SW* papers every issue. He had a heavy stutter but was gradually overcoming this. I met him some years later when I was running the IS Bookshop in from my house in Coventry in the early 1980's. We exchanged home visits then came the miners strike. I kept asking him about action at the Coventry pit where he worked as a miner. He always kept making excuses and never wanted to talk to me at the various meetings in the pit village or at the mine. Gradually the penny dropped - he had become a scab, a working miner. I never saw him again.

From the factory

Viv was an metal worker and had a good deal of experience in the union. He worked at BOC in Edmonton and Queen Street, Tottenham. The former, one of the workplaces where we sold the *SW*, was the scene of our first venture into industrial work in 1966, of which more later. He had an autistic son, a disappeared wife, a flighty partner and a daughter who came to the SWP Easter Rally at Skegness before joining up. Viv was active in the AEU, Camden branch where he was under CP influence. Following the leading AEU member Reg Birch, Viv had Maoist ideas but was prepared to work with the IS. We were prepared to work with him. Dick Southwell was a midlander who had thought out his socialism. He came to pretty much the same conclusions as the rest of us. He and his wife had joined the SWP as a result of our first great campaign on council tenants rents. They sometimes helped us out personally with childminding and Pete and Dave reported excitedly that Dick was a very fast car driver. Politically, he drifted slowly out of activity and moved house to Palmers Green.

Previously we had been involved briefly with a Nigerian man Tony Osagara who had been ripped off by a private landlord. This was through the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination. We mounted a picket outside an estate agent who acted as an agent. This was a fruitful area for socialists to work and previously Brian Lynam had been heavily committed to a long battle against private landlords in Paddington. As previously described, there had also been a campaign against a Mrs De Lusigan who had called her tenants "rubbish people". This was in Islington. It was after all not long after the Rachman scandal and the housing shortage resulted in a string of abuses.

Tenants revolt

Now the IS group were to embark on a campaign that resembled the Camden council tenants struggles, though ours was a less dramatic and publicised. Details of the S. Pancras events are in Dave Burn's book. Our situation arose when Haringey Council decided in April 1967 to substantially increase rents in July, a decision which was soon to be taken by many other Labour councils. Newcastle were going through the same process at this time, and the big GLC and Harlow tenants revolts were to follow.

There had been the usual grumblings in the Labour Party but it was the IS comrades that took action. It began with Mel who had been approached in his official capacity as a Labour Councillor by various tenants protesting against rent rises. We prepared up a leaflet, after planning the events to avoid damaging the Labour candidates in the 1967 elections.

At the start, there were only three tenants associations, or TA's, in existence and they were not active. We identified all known estates and gave out the leaflet, a pretty speculative job. The response was amazing.

We called several meetings, with Mel, me and Ian addressing packed crowds in the local halls. Our slogan was simple - *No Rent Rises*. We next set up an ad hoc Haringey Action Committee for Tenants as a result of a public meeting. Some Labour Party activists jumped on the band wagon. The local CP joined in especially in the area where they were strong, Hornsey. Mary D, later to become a Trades Union Studies tutor, and the writer Margaret M were their main people. Her husband was the CP leader of the "left" in the NUT, a real old fashioned Stalinist and typical CP union member. It must have come as a surprise to him to see the Trotskyists he was always denouncing, not actually functioning as agents of Hitler but leading a working class struggle. Perhaps he should have thought abit about the implications but I doubt that he did.

Organisation

We set up a tenants federation for estate associations to join and Mel was the Chair. This was the Haringey Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, HFTRA. We made sure the other officers were Labour Party or independent people. Ted W was a LP member and became very involved with HFTRA. His wife Doreen was to work at the IS Centre for some years, a conscientious worker.

I was editor of a news sheet, the *Tenants Voice* which "sold" 2,000 or so copies. We worked with many local tenants associations. Many were run by local union members or their wives. The campaign progressed. We held a march and mass rally of over 500 at the Civic Centre with a seriously noisy loudspeaker that halted council proceedings. The council did put up the rents but dropped proposed increases for the future and promised a freeze for 12 months, but not the three years the HFTRA had demanded. The whole campaign had been a triumph for careful organisation and strenuous extra-parliamentary activity plus of course the totally correct politics. We were meticulous about keeping names and addresses, I had over 100 in my notebooks. Moreover we made sure everyone else knew who to contact. *Tenants Voice*, in every edition, had a list of useful addresses on the estates. These were at The Hale, Tewkesbury, S Johns, Broad Lane, North East Tottenham, Milton Road, Love Lane, Commerce Road [2 off], Noel Park, Dylan Thomas, Coldfall, Stroud Green and Cheshunt. Later Arcacia Road was added and we had contact with individual tenants on estates, including Potters Bar.

The start

My notebooks record how every estate was canvassed, petitioned and leafleted. I wrote a leaflet *Can We Stop It ?* for the HFTRA and we flooded the estates with this. It argued for a rent strike, with union workplace support, and gave lots of examples where this had been successful, like Glasgow in 1915 and Birmingham in 1939. I attacked both Labour and Conservatives for their "jam tomorrow folks" promises and pointed out that even if we did not win completely, the struggle would act

as a deterrent for the Council. This was in fact the eventual result, as we have seen.

We generalised the fight. Don Cook, one of the S Pancras tenants leaders, came over to speak and gave a graphic if politically unreliable account of the barricades. Bailiffs came in police cars to evict the two leaders but tenants lifted up the cars and manually turned them around. An example of workers power with a huge symbolic significance.

The two flats were eventually stormed and the men evicted but re-instated when a Labour Council was elected. Tenants had followed Tory councillors everywhere they went - homes, work, pubs, clubs - and made their lives hell, so most of them refused to stand again. A lesson here on how to treat appointees today to quangos, possibly? The question he didn't answer, and which we never put, was why the evicted tenants were not re-instated by the massive crowds immediately after the eviction as they could easily have been. We were wise after the event in this case.

Back in Haringey, we made sure that union members were contacted. We already had a few contacts and all active members were identified as to their workplace and union. Copies of *TV* were delivered and we asked them to take these into work. We did not get any workplace industrial action but we tried.

I edited *Tenants Voice*. It was nominally a low cost bulletin, for TA to buy in bulk. Four editions came out, three in the 12 months of the struggle and its aftermath. A final copy came out in 1969. It had useful addresses mentioned above, which I compiled, and factual information. I did a pie chart that showed 55% of council expenditure went on interest charges, the lesson being about capitalism and so on. I also pointed out that mortgage holders had the same huge interest debt to pay and therefore tenants and residents were facing the same enemy. This of course is old hat now but it was unheard of in those days.

Powell

The cartoons were done by a mysterious person called *Lud*, which the politically aware would have noticed. Issue 4 had an interesting article I wrote on Enoch Powell, of "*rivers of blood fame*". The ISG comrades continuously attacked his racism but this was different. Powell was, as always, a free market advocate and in 1969 proposed to sell off all council housing and let free enterprise run future housing building. *Powell's Big Stick* pointed out the consequences of this and the ending of housing subsidies. I re-stated the points about interest charges and the costs of market dominance. The consequences of the re-instatement of the profit motive are only too obvious today but this was three decades ago.

Implications

This was a time when big events were soon to change the world but for us the big events came in 1967. The IS membership was still in hundreds at a

national level and we were inexperienced at mass politics as well as being very small in numbers. There was some talk of the tenants standing a candidate in a council by election at the time and apparently we supported this. My copy of the IS Working Committee minutes records that "so long as comrades were aware of the consequences, there would be no objections from the WC". Interesting stuff on [a] the attitude of the leadership to local initiatives, and [b] attitude to the Labour Party in 1967. Tenants rent struggles were a feature of these years. Shortly afterwards, there was struggle against huge GLC rent rises and Mel was installed as the Chair of an Action Committee. An 8 page pamphlet *Not a Penny on the Rents* was written by Ian McDonald and Ken L and thousands were distributed with a nominal cover price of 2d. After a couple of years a Socialist Worker pamphlet *Tory Rent Robbery and How to Fight It* was published mainly for Harlow Tenants. The authors were John Phillips, the National Secretary of the IS who subsequently retired to the country, and Hugh Kerr of Harlow who subsequently became a Euro MP. Neither publication devoted one word to the pioneering Haringey tenants struggle.

The nature of the struggle

A problem with rent struggles is their essentially temporary nature. It is not a continuous fight as on the shop floor and TA are not unions. Once the issue has been resolved they tend to decline into a shell of an organisation. The timing of the increases can make resistance difficult and rent strikes hard to get going. There cannot be a picket on a whole estate though some associations have picketed Payment Offices. It is the threat of eviction which is worse than job loss and quite often the call for a rent strike is not enforceable. We argued strongly in Haringey but without success on the issue, though the end result was greeted as a victory. We had done enough to enforce the tenants outrage.

Politically a number of lessons should have been learnt. The whole struggle had been a broad success for us. We had established our capacity to lead a fight successfully. We had made quite few members, including Ted W, a long-standing union activist. We had moreover deliberately acted to invite a threaten of expulsion from the LP and a whole group of people did resign, like T and D. This final stage concerned a plan to lobby the visit of one James Callaghan, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. A mass resignation from Haringey Labour Party followed - Ian Birchall, Norah, me, Jim and Fergus N from Hornsey. I think Ted was expelled and Dick left of his own accord. My account was afterwards written up in Fragments, HTUC, vol 1 [Woodward].

Size not critical

A second point goes deeper. While the SWP was to adopt an obsessive policy of building the mass revolutionary Party as the overriding objective, this campaign showed that a very small group of socialists can have an

enormous effect of the class, where they are directly involved. There was no mass Party in Haringey, yet we were able to excise great influence and actually recruit people as socialists. Historically the small SLP were able to perform the same function in the Shop Stewards and Working Class Movement in the factories during WW1. The much larger BSP were virtually sidelined. I think the workers council communist idea of socialists spending more time building up working class organisation, rather than the revolutionary Party, is by far the more constructive, but the leninist SWP would not agree [Gorter].

The People's Laundries

Meanwhile back in 1968, there were other campaigns to fight. There was a Council plan to close the municipal laundry on the Tewkesbury Estate. Tottenham had been one of the most enterprising councils in previous years and had won awards for this. It figured prominently in a book on the subject. Now such enterprises were being cut, one of them the laundry. This campaign was a spin off from the tenants. I wrote a short booklet "*Laundries for the People*". I can't recall whether we won or not, but there was the usual march, demonstration and so on. Much later on I was to learn that the Imperial Wharf estate in Craven Park Road, South Tottenham, was built in 1975 with provision for laundries but the council ran out of money. Laundries were cancelled. History can repeat itself. . .

International Socialists branch

As well as expanding our role in the class struggle, the IS organisation had established itself with a regular programme of fortnightly or weekly political meetings. I reprint below that for this period:

- 5 Feb Alan Woodward on an issue of current affairs [an old stand by]
- 12 Feb Frank Rowe on Problems of the Building Industry. Frank was in *Socialist Current* [Widgery] and there were strikes on at the time.
- 19 Feb Alan Watts on a current issue
- 26 Feb Tony Cliff on USSR and China
- 5 Mar Christine G on Automation in Offices
- 12 Mar Geoff Carlsson on Long Term Contracts [Geoff was a founder member of the SR Group, an activist in the AEU and a leading shop steward in West London]
- 19 Mar Jim C. on Democracy after the Revolution
- 26 Mar Chris Harman on Class Consciousness

We also held a series of Marxist lectures by Tony Cliff. There was a printed set of Notes, it was well attended and everyone said we should do it again. My copy of the Notes are lost, which is a pity because they did seem a good introduction.

The May events in France 1968 and their consequences

Then there was 1968. The events of that period, starting out with the Tet offensive in Vietnam, the General strike in France and so on, were reflected in a modest way in the revolt of workers in Britain. The events are well known, hugely important and are covered in Chris Harman's *The Fire Next Time* and Maurice Brinton's *Paris 68*.

So far as the structure and politics of our own organisation are concerned, it is now agreed that 1968 changed the perspectives of the IS, making it into a vanguard party of the classic Leninist kind. In Tottenham some changes in personnel and organisation came largely as a result of the students' revolt. The London School of Economics students had held a dramatic and successful occupation and several of the participants moved into Tottenham.

A group lived at 374 High Road, and individuals were round about. Probably the leading light was Laurie Flynn later to become a full time journalist on the SW and on television 'World in Action'. I will deal with his activities in a later chapter on health and safety at work. Morgan O'Brien, a long serving IS/SWP member, became a teacher. He also wrote for various journals and had a wicked sense of humour. He was to be around for decades and was last spotted outside selling papers outside the Climate camp on Blackheath in 2009. Phil Hall became an expert on the monarchy and scratches out a living from this. Mike Milotte has written a book on the CP of Ireland which is well recommended [Milotte].

Transformation of a federalist group

The influx of students was a useful addition to the IS branch and there was a whole new group of activists. After a while, there was a bit of tension because the students always seemed to have sorted out branch business before the rest of us got there. This was aggravated by a fierce debate that was going on in the late 60's over the nature of the IS. Organisation had been somewhat loose and was characterised as federalist. A long debate over Federalism versus Centralism followed.

In the local branch, the students were in the forefront of moves to introduce a Leninist democratic centralism. I opposed this as did some others. This was not on the basis of any coherent set of ideas or critique of Leninism, more on the feeling that everything had worked well up to now - *if it ain't broke, don't fix it*. Certainly Tony Cliff's own assessment of Lenin as contrasted to Rosa Luxemburg, published in the 1959 book, would give support to those opposing the Leninist view of politics in favour of a Luxemburgist view.

The essence of the changed line

In the end we lost the decision in the Tottenham branch. This was inevitable, given the influx of students. Within the national debate, there was a lot of documents going around and massive discussion. I think hardly anyone understood the implications or even the content of the decision. Reading up on the subject many years after, I appreciated that

the organisation of the Micro faction posed the perspectives of an open Party organisation, based on the Glasgow precedent of working with other groups.

Many of the local activists did not participate except in a passive way in this process. At the time, my own response was that the issue was not important, as it would not affect the work with the class. This as I later realised was a big mistake. It was a move towards the construction of a Party as the first second and third priority. Laurie Flynn, I know, looks back on this decision taken at a national level as the start of the process that was to end in the disaster of a Leninist Party some years later. His own role and the political implications are discussed later.

Locally

So by 1968-9, we were now out of the LP, had made a good impact locally with the tenants campaign and were ready to take on other issues. Branch organisation had become well established and there was a strong tradition of political debate. Bigger issues were to come into our perspectives - the anti Vietnam war and the intensification of the struggle in the workplace. The national organisation having grown a good deal as a result of the 1968 type activities, had taken steps to centralise itself. The next few years were to see the expansion of the IS, the re-birth of rank and file organisation nationally and our role, however minor, in the great events of 1972. This is told below [Darlington].

The essence of this chapter has been the setting up of a strong and viable local group of the ISG in Tottenham. We performed well in the tenants movement and had worked out a useful routine in the branch. We had established our reputation in the area for the future.

This chapter describes jobs and workplaces I was in from 1961 to 1972. I was teaching in secondary schools for six years, then I went into factories for a further five. I became active in unions, the local trades [union] council, and held various positions in unions and workplaces.

It was at this time, in 1967, that I decided to take my politics seriously and get into the working class proper. The political line was "The turn to the class" which I took literally. I had been teaching in secondary schools for six years since leaving teacher training college, in various locations. After being posted into East London by the GLC by piece of manipulation, I had a series of short term stays at schools as Divisional staff. I started at a Catholic secondary modern where my stay was very short due to my wearing a *Ban the Bomb* badge. The headmaster concocted some phoney report about my work but the real reason was clearly political.

'To Sir, with Love'

My next port of call was S. George in the East, on Cable Street. This was the school which had been the subject of an experiment in "libertarian" education after the war. The Head, Mr A.A. Bloom had basically abolished the cane, introduced projects rather than subject education, etc. and ruled that as long as the kids were on the premises, that was OK. The catch was that they had to enrol, at the start of the month I think it was, for classes, dropping in was not allowed. Soon boredom set in and they did enrol for classes. By dint of lots of talking and reassuring, he built up a situation of trust with them and some considerable progress was made.

The school became famous as the only State experiment in A.S. Neil's methods and there are accounts in anarchist literature, [Gibson] The problem came when Bloom died. The educational authorities had appointed an American, Bill Panday, as deputy and he carried on in much the same tradition. By the time I was posted there, a religious maniac was in charge - she was always quoting the Bible, not the best way of impressing kids in the school on Cable Street. It was also reputed to be the model for E.R. Braithwaite's book "To Sir with Love", and it was a pretty tough place. I never met "E. R. Braithwaite" and still wonder if it was a pen name for Bill Panday. Anyway, I survived some hairy experiences, as I think the kids sensed I was on their side.

PTC and Stepney Green

I then worked at Poplar Technical College, one of the remaining examples of the 1944 tripartite system of technical, grammar and secondary schools. The Head, an old boy called Pat Partridge, was one of the old school - a glass of sherry before staff meetings, etc., a type of person soon to be replaced by ambitious 35 year, suited, bureaucrats with a career to make.

The last two schools were amalgamated into a brand new Comprehensive at Stepney Green . Here as at previous schools, I did Physical Education. I had no training in this but had captained one of the teaching training college football teams, and this was deemed sufficient. The outstanding feature at Stepney Green was the presence of footballers from nearby West Ham United to coach the kids. I got to know some of them but this was before the 1966 World Cup where Geoff Hurst, Bobby Moore and Martin Peters won the trophy for England and West Ham. John Bond I remember was one player involved, and John Lyall, so was a winger called Sissons.

The highlight of the season was the annual Staff v Kids match and I still keep a photo of our (losing) team. I have remained a supporter ever since, though my children are keen Spurs fans.

Lastly

Subsequently I decided to go to Amos Grove School in Palmers Green where I did History for 2 years. This was very ordinary teaching of suburban kids in a very bureaucratic regime. I soon left. Finally as a result of a contact in the East London Teachers Association of the NUT, I went to Woodberry Down Comprehensive. I had responsibility for one of the so called "remedial stream" classes. This was composed of some kids with educational and social problems. Some were very bright, like the daughter of Tony G, a CP activist. This work was better than what I had been doing but it was still a travesty of education.

Whilst at Woodberry Down - a flagship comprehensive, now closed - I did an analysis of the type of teachers that various streams of kids had to teach them. The "A" streams and the "G" streams got the most experienced teachers in most subjects. The school had made its reputation by getting good examination results - grammar school level - with typical secondary modern kids, from intelligence tests grades. The "A" streams got the best teachers and remarkably good exam results. The "G" stream kids also got experienced teachers and had lessons that were twice as long which had clearly added consistent educational benefit. They also had a class teacher for various subjects. The rest of the kids got the specialist subject teachers. This was better than most local secondary schools but the priority of exam results over children's education were clearly demonstrated.

The union

Throughout this time, I had been active in the union as well as the workplace. As an East London teacher, I had been on the committee of the NUT East London Teachers Association [ELTA]. This was run by Walter Triesman, a relative of David Triesman who was to become an leading Full Time Official in various teachers' unions in the 1990's, and government Minister. Being on Divisional Staff, I was not in any school for

long enough to be a union representative but sat on the committee as a general member, along with a small band of long serving stalwarts.

I was delegated to the Young Teacher's group of the London Association and soon became the editor of the *Young Teacher Page* in the journal. I did my best to insert some politics into the situation. Here I met Sarah who was later to marry an old friend of mine, Roger C. The teacher's union structure in many cities was dominated at this time by the CP, who carefully controlled what went on.

One interesting spin off of my activities here came when the national union produced a glossy report on young teacher's pay. They gave a selection of case studies including mine, and I was asked to appear in a television discussion on the subject. I duly turned up and was pried with the studio drinks. I took along my copy of Tony Cliff's book on *Incomes Policy and Shop Stewards* and the camera zoomed in on this - teachers becoming shop stewards and so on. The discussion went down predictable channels, as far as I can recall. I was subsequently featured in a national newspaper report where I was portrayed as a real martyr.

As secretary of the East London Young Teachers, I spent a considerable amount of time organising, writing, etc. My notebooks have a virtually complete record of ELTA meetings and a lot of material on the YT. The activists there were Peter Jeffrey and Mike Harris who was a railway freak from Worthing in Sussex. There was also a bloke called Ray S from whom I bought a car, which I drove for years without a license..

Many decades later I was to come across him again. In the 1990's we were running a campaign against the privatisation of secondary schools in Haringey and a sympathiser was reported of his name. He was a school governor at Nightingale Primary School and after discussing perspectives I asked him if he was the same man I knew long ago. It turns out he was, but didn't seem too friendly on learning this. Apparently he had cancer and was expected to die. We left it at that

The committee

Back in East London, we spent much time preparing resolutions, speaking and giving reports. We always tried to have speakers at meetings and I managed to get IS speakers quite a lot. I don't think we recruited anyone but it was the start of the process of undermining the CP control

When I later went to Enfield, I was similarly elected to the committee but here it involved detailed work on the nuts and bolts of comprehensive schools. Ross McWhirter the extreme right winger tried to legally subvert the change as I discovered subsequently. I was very active in the campaign for comprehensives at the time and my notebooks have dozens of articles and resolutions on the topic. In all my work on teachers unions at this stage, I was unable to play any really effective political role. The CP had a stranglehold over everything that moved. It was very much a case of

slipping some political content in - a book review or a resolution or a speaker - around the edges.

Finally I decided to pack in teaching which I found quite unrewarding and take up what was perceived as real work. Though I had a wife and 2 kids, this was not such a gamble as it might have seemed later. Work was plentiful and unemployment didn't seem a problem. The politics of "real work" may have been a different matter, but the Party was in truth very short of workers and very long on students and teachers.

Industry

For five years, I worked in a variety of industrial locations. My first job was in a warehouse for a company jointly owned by Johnson Matthey, Universal Matthey. It made, and re-processed, petro-chemical products. I worked from a small office but was required to do the manual work now and then. I learnt to drive a fork truck, (health and safety training was non-existent), and manually handle six hundred pound drums full of aluminium pellets.

The main character was Percy the 'key' fork truck driver, who kept the process going with the right number of drums of the right substances. He worked every day and had to be carefully approached about taking Xmas day off! His attitude was perhaps typical of a generation that had been unemployed for years between the wars.

The consequences of working here were two fold. I did get into a working environment but there was no chance of getting the union going. Secondly the exposure to petro-chemical products may have resulted in my getting cancer of the lymph nodes some 15 years later. The reprocessing involved dealing with "spent" platinum catalyst from oil refineries. This was rich in chemicals, including I believe benzene. Benzene is a carcinogen, that is cancer causing agent, and a strong suspect for Hodgkin's Disease of the lymph nodes. Of course there may have been another cause but since I was subject to this for a year at work, it remains the main candidate for the disease.

Bigger deal at ERM

Anyway after some months, I moved on to being a technical clerk in Enfield Rolling Mills (ERM). This was better territory. There was no union for clerical or technical grades so I contacted the various people whom I got to know. I collected some recruiting leaflets and handed them round. Soon we had several dozen people. The Agreement with the Engineering Employers Federation gave recognition to my union, Clerical and Administrative Workers [CAWU], with one member - a curious agreement indeed, and a relic of a war time strike settlement, I think.

A quick success came when I took up the case of a Time Clerk in the Foundry who had worked overtime without pay for years. He got £700 back pay. ERM refined copper using a lot of wood - it could have been a scene from the industrial revolution anytime in the last hundred years. The

Foundry was no place to work in and the bloke deserved every penny he could get. The machinery, as elsewhere, was German and was clearly very old. I suspected it was part of some post WW1 reparations deal. The environment itself - the red hot copper pieces, workers catching them with wooden tongs and feeding them back into the rolling mills - was an education in itself

However, this pay victory really got us going. The management were set back by our progress. Not only was I chief steward for the CAWU, but the action had sparked off a revolt among all staff workers. The technicians proper expanded quickly and their union, the Association Of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff (ASTMS) appointed reps. The remnants of the Draughtsman's and Technician Association (DATA), revived under the same leadership, Jock Gibson. I set up a Staff Side Committee and became Secretary. The main manual union was British Iron and Steel Crafts Trades Association (BISAKTA) which had fought a long battle for recognition in WW2. One bloke was on the NEC of the union, which was based largely in Wales and the North. The workplace convenor, however, traditionally came from the engineers and maintenance workers in the Amalgamated Engineering Union, AEU.

There was a curious situation concerning one of the technicians, Harry, who was an ASTMS rep. I went to his house for some reason and he showed me a collection of white South African magazines, of a semi fascist type. He was a good union activist and I was totally surprised by this revelation. I found it hard to believe he took that kind of thing seriously. I just kept away from him afterwards, there seemed little chance of any collective action at the time.

One incident was quite revealing about the nature of unions. The union full time officer, FTO, Ray Edwards of the CAWU came down to talk and stayed over lunch. Apparently a tradition, for him as full time official, FTO, , was to lunch in the Executive Canteen as a Visitor. I usually ate in the works canteen and told him if he wanted something to eat that was the place. He didn't show too much open dissent but then he was to on the way to become assistant General secretary of the Union. In the event, illness prevented this.

A long running strike

Another important event while I was at ERM, was a strike next door at Johnson Matthey by 40 AEU members. Again the bulk of the rest of the workers were BISAKTA. They ignored the picket line and their main steward actually drove a lorry every day at full speed at the pickets. In BISAKTA, the steward was allowed to keep the percentage commission on the members subs collected and this bloke had just had a new house built in Enfield. Talk about being in the bosses pocket! A fuller account of this strike is included below in the chapter on strikes.

Anyway all good things come to an end. The AEU withdrew their strike pay after a year and my mate Gerry O'Farrell, the AEU steward, saw his strike slow fade away. Meanwhile ERM management had not been idle. Redundancy was unexpectedly announced for staff workers and it came as no surprise that the three union senior stewards were on the list. We appealed to the manual workers but a curious thing happened.

Fixed up

By what all trusting souls must regard as coincidence, BISAKTA had very recently set up a white collar section. A relative of the TUC General Secretary Vic Feather, one Sandy Feather, a FTO, was put in charge. Even more curiously this same "section" now appeared in the ERM with a recruiting drive. The bulk of the manual workers were persuaded that their union could drag victory from the jaws of defeat, as long as the other unions were smashed. The AEU convenor, Harold Mayes, a decent guy, did his best but the BISAKTA stewards had been bought over. This was a quick end to my promising career as a senior union rep.

The IS put out a mass leaflet and some Party members picketed the home of one of the Directors of ERM who lived in expensive houses in Southgate but after half an hour the police came and eventually we had to leave. It did give them a problem and they were at first unsure what to do - not a lot of "watching or besetting" goes on in Southgate. They did finally locate the 1875 Act however. To sum up, I was sacked.

Labouring

Next I did a stint in the local gas depot logging repairs, then a few months labouring at Morson's chemical plant in Ponders End, at Enfield. There was an Irish foreman who was always chasing us up. One day the tea break conversation got onto Northern Ireland and I defended the Catholic minority. This was the time of the Belfast Protestant RUC type police, the B Specials, raiding the Catholic area in a drunken riot on Saturday nights, smashing windows and generally intimidating the residents. His attitude changed immediately, and even when he caught me reading *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* [Tressell] behind a shed, he remained friendly. About this time I had been to a few meetings of the *Labour Committee Against Internment*. The issue did not really take off until Bloody Sunday in 1972. British Army Paratroopers killed 13 demonstrators and citizens, mainly by shooting them in the back. As usual, the legal system covered up this clear example of a NAZI style war crime. It was not the first war crime in 300 years of oppression nor was it to be the last. More on this later [McCann]

Redundancy again

I next worked at Clarkson's Steel as an assistant storekeeper. This involved getting steel and other parts for people on machines. No union was recognised but there were few members. We began quietly collecting promises from various workers, the majority of whom would have been in

the AEU. A redundancy programme was announced but I was not on it. This was really amazing. Of course the whole thing had been a set up. Someone must have passed on the information about who was trying to organise. A few days before the implementation date, changes in the programme were made. I was to go instead of a 50 year old bloke !

Big time

My luck then seemed to change. I got a job at Keith Blackman's as an Engineering Clerk. By now we were in 1972, and right at that time the dockers were imprisoned. The works committee called a joint mass meeting, for the first time involving both manual and white collar workers. They needed a microphone and I was approached, as secretary of the Haringey Trades Council, to get one. I did, and smuggled it in carefully. The meeting went off brilliantly. All out ! A load of us went down to Pentonville Prison where the dockers were. I organised some of the Blackman's staff to block the zebra crossing outside the prison and a huge traffic jam followed. We tried to get bus drivers to abandon their vehicles but no luck. The dockers were soon released and it was a high point of union action. The TUC later claimed the credit as it had called for a strike the following week, clearly seeking to control the activity. However it was the unofficial strikes that did the damage - more on this later [Darlington].

The consequences for me were not so good. I was due to go off abroad on a camping holiday that Friday. At half past four I was called to the office on a pretext, told that there was an unidentified "lie" on my application form and sacked. Clearly someone had again whispered about my role in the weeks events. By now the place was empty and the union reps had gone home, I hurriedly phoned them then rushed off to get the ferry.

When I returned 2 weeks later, it was all over. The shop stewards in the other union were ready to come out in sympathy but my union would not make the call [Seadon]. CAWU never was much cop and the union reps accepted management's line. Another promising career cut short, this time in only five days. However the period had been one of intense development for me.

In the union structure

When I did my own "turn to the class" in 1967, I had joined the North London branch of the CAWU. This was a composite geographical branch covering Blackmans, Standard Telephones and Cables and some miscellaneous individuals. The Chair was an old CP-er, Eddie Hayes. This was the time when the CP were emerging from decades of persecution by the right wing. Eddie was a specialist in bringing on young activists who, of course, remained sympathetic to the CP as they went up the structure. I was seen as such at first and appointed to be delegate to the Haringey Trades Council, later Haringey Trades Union Council, HTUC. Eddie ran the branch, though the actual branch secretary was a passive fellow traveller from Blackmans, Mick Gentle. I met Eddie Hayes many

years later at meetings of the Marx Memorial Library , where he was officiating. I spoke to him about the union branch but he had obviously forgotten. He had lent me a history of the union, *By Hand and By Brain*, but he had again forgotten so I kept hold of it. He died shortly afterwards in 1994. A subsequent union history came from Oxford [Marsh]

When I got the union going in ERM, my politics were open to scrutiny and this intensified as I became more active. Later when the HTUC put on a meeting with Bernadette Devlin, later MacAlisky , the young MP for Mid Ulster, this came out as an issue about union policy. The CP began putting the boot in.

However for now, I attended branch meeting with huge pockets of cash from ERM members union subscriptions and then I had to go weekly to the branch treasurer with all this. I had shown I was capable of running a union at the workplace, and my credibility was established. I remained in the branch for some years despite changing workplaces. As previously, I soon became involved in the Regional and National structure but I was able to work politically too.

A neglected rank and file group

In the CAWU, and Association of Professional, Executive and Clerical Staff or APEX as it had been re-named, we had recruited members in factories and in Air Transport. There was also members from the head offices of unions in London. We set up a Rank & File group called APEX ACTION. This was able to function at a low level, without a newspaper, and to make some impact on the union. For example we drew up model resolutions and held meetings on subjects like the check off method of paying union subs. We mounted an effective challenge to the bureaucracy at one Annual Conference, and gained a lot of support.

APEX ACTION was beginning to make ground so the expected crack down came. We were "proscribed", a clever move that meant we could not be elected as a delegate to any outside body, and possibly union bodies. That should have meant my role in HTUC would end within 12 months but they did not insist on this. The old CP-ers knew about bans and proscriptions having been on the receiving end for some decades. Eddie Hayes stepped in to make sure the HTUC towed the line, as a section of the CP began to enforce on us what they had endured over the previous decades of right wing domination.

The IS was soon to have a whole set of R&F groups but APEX ACTION and the London teachers were the first. APEX ACTION was perhaps the first of the IS fractions but has been studiously ignored even in the normally accurate history. [Birchall] .

The period ended on something of a high point in 1972, described above. I had established the union in one workplace and learnt a lot here and at other places. Eddie Hayes had been my teacher in this respect but I had set up an alternative leadership in the union and union branch.

Haringey Trade Union Council

Largely as a result of my activity, the HTUC had been transformed from a derelict body into a well organised unit, with a well attended monthly meeting. It ran public meetings and I did a newsletter. This was sent out not just to union branches who affiliated constitutionally but also to local workplaces. They were invited to send observers with speaking rights to attend meetings, and though this did not happen much, it was a move in the right direction. The CP were terrified of such unofficial action.

It was another example of a single socialist transforming the situation by being in the right place, at the right time and having the right politics. There was no mass party as Leninism, would have demanded. Even the small IS branch was not much help, being mainly student orientated. Like the tenants campaign, this was another lesson I did not learn at the time but reflected on later.

Much of what I did as HTUC secretary was on my own initiative but the Chair was Bill Neary, a furniture worker and CP member. He was active on the CP industrial group, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, LCDTU, and an influential person in my life. He was also Chair of the London Furniture Workers Shop Steward's Committee, [Moss]. Some of this was later written up in HTUC Fragments [Woodward]

Moving on

My own career now took a different turn. I did odd jobs for a few months then took a course at Enfield Tech on Industrial Relations. There was a division between union students and those with a degree who were just taking another course. I usually went around with the union people but I have lost contact with them now. I did finish up with a Distinction for my Diploma, formally awarded by a man who was later to become TUC general secretary, Len Murray.

After that, I worked for a few months as a legal assistant at the head office of the Agricultural Workers Union. I did routine clerical work processing claims for the very modest accident money paid by the union. I was supposed to check to see if a compensation case was possible but the forms didn't have enough information.

The union had traditionally been staffed by people from outside its own ranks with just the regional officers being ex branch activists. Its history followed that of many others - heroic foundations, a big strike that was defeated in the early 1920's, expansion in the forties and so on. It was to be merged with the T&GWU in the early 1980's. [Groves]. It was a short stay at this work because I was accepted unexpectedly at Warwick University in Coventry to do a course for a Master of Arts degree.

Big events were just on the horizon but my own direct contribution to the national picture of the ISG was non-existent after 1972. Before long I was to be involved in Trade Union Education but the motives of the employers and government were not those associated with educational enterprises.

They were seeking the integration into management and national union structures of the independently minded shop stewards. I was well aware of what was to be planned to happen, as my annotated copy of the Donovan Report can testify. However I had now talked my way into the enemies camp where I was to fight a rear guard action for more than 20 years. This involved a move to Coventry where the class was most strongly organised. Before that however I take a look at the broader issues of the industrial struggle in North London. These were of greater significance in the big picture .

This chapter has relayed my experience in various workplaces and in the basic union structure. This was against a powerful CP presence and had only a limited success. However there were highlights, 1972 being one

Chapter Five Notes on the Industrial Struggle

This chapter is concerned with the end of the 1960's up to 1974, including the first workplace leaflet by the IS branch, and probably nationally. It deals with industrial issues and publications, surveys the political parties and goes onto the CPGB and its industrial network of union activists. It also covers my brief venture into the national leadership of the IS/SWP.

When I first became involved in political issues, the IS group, as it was, had published *Socialist Review*, for ten years or so. There was the *Industrial Worker*, which became the *Labour Worker*, and then the *Socialist Worker* in 1962 and 1968 respectively. At the time there were few actually working members, nearly everyone was a student or teacher. Nonetheless, the orientation was towards the workplace. Where there was a member, or members, in a workplace, we always sought to give leadership in building the workers organisation - and through that socialist politics - and members tried to get elected as union reps in the same spirit.

Background

However before we consider this in details we need to establish the big picture or framework of the situation we were in. We need to do a survey of the political element in the workers movement. The central idea of marxism that I believed in at the time is that exploitation occurs through the compulsory subjection of labour to the market, specifically to employers at their workplaces. Resistance to this is sporadic and uneven, at first with the union organisation later being the mechanism of systematic opposition. Political opposition occurs through various types of parties - broadly "Labour", anarchists, communist and/or revolutionary parties.

Labour Parties see the problem as one of distribution of wealth and hence attach no significance to the workplace - they concentrate on achieving very minor changes of re-distribution through parliament anyway. Work issues are left to the Trade Unions, which offer reciprocal general support to the LP [Birchall 86]. Anarchists see the essentials of the system but believe a change can be achieved through mass industrial action without the need for a political party to guide the revolution, an ideology that is now growing round the fringes of politics. Anarchism ideas were severely dented by the defeat of the anarchists in the Spanish Revolution [Woodward 11].

The original marxist perspective

Marxist revolutionary socialists see the need for the party - but seek to avoid the over centralisation which developed under the state capitalist regime of Stalin. The exact nature of the party, the degree of centralisation, the type of organisation and so on, is still being worked out by the practical process of party building, to little avail. The main theory is that of the "leninist" view of organisation, which is practised by the trotskyst groups.

An alternative view reflects the concern felt by some about the party chauvinism that downgrades revolutionary action on working class politics into "interventions". Formal organisation around these concerns, which approximate generally to workers council communism, and can be found in [Smart]

What is clear is that any organisation working for social change needs to have members active in the workplace pushing both the politics of resistance and socialism. There is a need for a rank and file organisation, as many SWP members did recognise. The period of the late 1960's and the early 1970's saw considerable steps being taken to realise the role of IS in the workplace, in what was a social crisis of some dimensions.

Our main work however was from outside workplaces, because of the class composition of the membership. We tried to sell our paper by standing at the gate in the morning, or to pickets where there was a dispute and these were put on. Because of the dominant role of the CP, we were often warned off or given a frosty reception. We could mainly try to put pressure on the CP and its organisations, but not much

Size

There were two limitations for our work, firstly our size but more importantly our politics. We were very small before 1968, and membership was a few hundred which precluded national action for the duration of the Labour Government. More significantly our politics were a mixture of Left Labour, where many of us began, Trotskyism, in which the Group was founded and ideas from the anti war, anti colonialism, and anti racialism campaigns. There was no body of Marxist literature, rather like the pre WW1 period and the dominance of the CP was more damaging than constructive.

Smallness is not an insuperable barrier but appeared so at the time. Our lack of cohesion probably was. Examples of small parties, or groups of socialists, being successful range from the SLP and the Shop Stewards and Working Class Movement in WW1 to Tottenham IS and the tenants campaign, but political leadership is crucial rather than size

Wilson's Labour Government

It would perhaps be useful to consider industrial work against a background of the policy of the Government. Much of the previous period had seen a fragmentation of the industrial struggle but now industrial matters became a central part of the Labour Government's concerns from 1964 to 1970. This had three main elements - firstly an incomes policy to regulate wages and Harold Wilson's income policy came in annual packages. Initially, a total freeze, then limitations of allowable pay increases - if you could get them. This was greeted with increasing hostility on the shop floor from 1966 onwards.

Secondly a drive to increase work intensity, of which more later, and a lastly legislative plan to generally control "unions". But this third aspect did not mean national unions, because union leaders had always been compliant. The whole programme was geared to control shop stewards and weaken the workplace strength of union members, specifically strikes at the workplace. The incoming Tories continued with the same perspectives and similar methods from 1970 to 74.

The battle begins

An interesting example of opposition to the pay policy grew out of another element in the joint employer-government approach, the attack on shop floor organisation. The situation was at the ENV factory in West London. A shop steward here was Geoff Carlsson, a long standing IS member and he had built up a strong group of shop stewards and some IS members. It was so strongly organised that the union Joint Shop Stewards Committee [JSSC] would vet every week the list of new starters before they were to be taken on. This was to eliminate the disruption by known non-union workers, or noners, it was said. ENV's had a long tradition of militant action going back decades. There is a famous photo of them marching through London in the sixties in support of NHS workers with placards saying "We care for those who care for us" [Barker]. This was on the cover of the Cliff and Barker book on *Incomes Policy* [Cliff].

The factory was taken over by an American group, Eaton Yale, who eventually had to close down the place to get rid of the union in the late 1960's. We did not know it at the time but this company had a long history of union busting in the USA [Weir]. It was however a surprise that, an interesting spin off from the norm was the attempted victimisation of the convenor, Geoff Mitchell. On instructions from the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, he had written to Paddington Labour Party pointing out that one of their councillors had not abided by an unofficial strike decision. He was a member of the CAWU at ENV. The councillor's response was to take legal action against Geoff Mitchell.

Action

This of course was a gift to revolutionary socialists and active union members. As a result, the IS comrades, and indeed the whole London organisation, had been mobilised and a defence committee was set up in January 1966. In May, a further public meeting was called. A number of us from Tottenham went over to the Anson Hall. There was a number of CP speakers as well as the ENV comrades and an action committee was set up which incorporated the fight against the Incomes Policy, as well as the defence of the convenor.

This was the London Industrial Shop Stewards Defence Committee, though later the Industrial part was dropped and it was known as the LSSDC. This was a gigantic step forward for the IS group and depended on the support of the local AEU FTO's. These were CP-ers such as Billy Taylor, and Reg

Birch who had apparently left the CPGB but not yet joined the Maoists. A libertarian, Peter Turner, editor of their journal, was also on the committee.

The book

One of the first achievements was a publication. Tony Cliff and Colin Barker had just written a book on Incomes Policy and shop stewards, and Reg Birch had been persuaded to write the Introduction. This was to be the first of three books on working conditions and resistance. When it was published, it became the focus of local branch activity. Much of our time was spent in identifying possible buyers, and getting resolutions of support. There were leaflets against the IP in the thousands under the heading of "Smash the Freeze".

The LSSDC had its own journal *Resistance*, of which I have two issues. It did not just cover engineering as there were articles about London buses as well. One of these was by Frank Cosgrove, a bus worker from Walthamstowe, later to be a full time staff Officer, FTO, in the Transport & General Workers Union, responsible for the training of union reps, of which more later. Just prior to being appointed he had co-authored a book for rank and file bus drivers. He frantically made sure his name was removed before publication. A sign of things to come.

The LSSDC was headed by at first by Geoff Carlsson and then by T&GWU bus driver Chris Davidson who had just moved to Tottenham. Both were well established IS members. It was a general Rank & File body, which was attempting to encourage shop stewards fight against management and where necessary against FTO's, and link them up as a co-ordination exercise. The Tottenham IS branch promoted the LSSDF and the Cliff and Barker book. We approached people who might buy it and sold it where possible.

Local initiative as well

A second important event occurred locally. We also took an initiative in a British Oxygen factory. I had been a subscriber to the CP run *Labour Research Department*, which was quite different in those days to the shadow TUC organisation it has become since the 1960's.

Its monthly magazine published articles and statistics about items of interest and in 1966, it gave details of the profits of BOC. This included a figure on the profits made per BOC employee. I raised this item at the branch and we decided to prepare a leaflet based on this and put it into the works one Friday morning. Alan Watts, Mel Norris, Ian Birchall and I wrote the leaflet, and decided that it should be published by the LSSDC.

This leaflet had a dramatic effect. Many people assumed it had been done by the JSSC in some way and not a lot of work was done that morning, we were told. The JSSC had just previously produced a document on pay

increases and so on. The leaflet was entirely unexpected, an auspicious start to the new IS industrial programme.

Result

We did not sell a lot more papers but did recruit a member, Viv Mamo. I think this was the first time an IS group had produced a workplace bulletin and we were really pleased with its success. It put us on the map, so to speak, in political terms. In the following years we became experts at writing leaflets from the outside, chiefly during disputes. The best ones were short, humorous and colloquial in style. In the 1990's, there was a resurgence in workplace bulletins. This time we had computerised equipment, some thousands of young comrades and an objective situation that was much more positive from our point of view.

General events

There were a series of strikes in these years, of the seaman, at Fords and Pilkingtons, etc. Most importantly the Yorkshire miners came out on a district unofficial strike under a new local semi official "panel", with an area leader called Arthur Scargill. Though pit face strikes had been common, this was a new development, and one was across an area and was to have a huge potential.

In the last analysis, incomes policies in times of full employment just didn't work. Not only were they very difficult to enforce, there was also a gap between lower wages and the hoped-for improvement. I am not the appropriate writer and this is no place for extensive economic detail, but the Cliff and Barker book did challenge the supposed benefits and we argued this energetically.

The events as they occurred

By 1968, the focus was shifting to the opposition to the Government's plans to introduce anti union laws, or rather anti strike laws. Although the union leaders had seen to it that there were no official strikes between 1945 and 1951 and even under the Tories just a handful in subsequent years, the number of unofficial ones continued and was rising. These strikes were not only unofficial but of short duration usually in breach of the procedure, and generally successful.

It was seen as a disruptive force in workplaces, the so called "British disease". Harold Wilson had set up an Royal Commission on unions soon after the Labour had returned to office and the resulting Donovan Report had recommended reforming union procedures to incorporate the deviant and usually unofficial shop stewards. It was guided by Hugh Clegg of Warwick University. Wilson ignored this. The left wing Minister of Employment, Barbara Castle, proposed a law against unofficial strikes.

Historical digression

The precedents for this were not good. Tories have always relied on creating unemployment to weaken workers and this had been used to good effects in the past, notably in the 1930's. Going on strike is unlawful

anyway as it is a breach of the common law contract of employment. It is an offence that historically justified dismissal in law, and there remains the possibility of legal action against individuals for compensation for the employer.

When WW2 occurred, Ernie Bevin, the T&GWU General Secretary promoted into the Cabinet, was not satisfied with this enormous legal imbalance and introduced state legislation to make it now illegal - a criminal offence - not only to go on strike but even to plan to. Now the trouble with war from a capitalist point of view is that it brings back full employment. This meant workers tried hard to re-coup some of their losses of the slump years by taking industrial action.

As the war progressed, despite the policy of the Communist Party of Great Britain from June 1941 which was to oppose strikes to keep up war production and save the Soviet Union, this is what happened. The number of strikes grew and by 1944 the figure was more than the average in the previous decade, despite the War, despite the Law and despite the CPGB. Moreover when the government tried to take a firm stand, by fining and imprisoning the Kent miners union reps, the men stood out. The government was forced to negotiate with the imprisoned leaders. The law was effectively nullified by workers opposition, which of course is the main reason why union leaders are very hesitant about encouraging it [Wedderburn]

Back to Wilson and co

Regardless of the lessons of the past, back in 1969 Mrs Castle pressed ahead with her "In Place of Strife" plans and introduced an Industrial Relations Bill. Despite denials, it would have resulted in shop stewards being put in prison for contempt of court, and such a result is the inevitable consequence of the common law system of employment contracts. In the locality, there had been a round of meetings, organised by the more active and independent Communist shop stewards. This were linked to one day stoppages in February and May 1969 against the proposed legislation organised by the communist Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, [LCDTU] This had been set up in 1966 and was sponsored by a series of factory Joint Shop Stewards Committees and London wide committees in the Docks, Building industry and Exhibition workers.

U turn

Such was the opposition that Wilson dropped his plans in return for a TUC "solemn and binding" assurance of restraint and things went quiet for a while. The Tories were elected in 1970 and made clear their immediate intention to introduce a radical change in industrial relations law. It was a package to bring in American practice regarding recognition and to require unions to register with a State agency. There were fines for defaulters in a long, complex law, the Industrial Relations Act.

In the Tottenham area, hostilities broke out again. Once more the LCDTU took the lead as the parliamentary process continued. A huge unofficial stoppage occurred on 8 December 1970 involving 600,000 workers. Further stoppages took place on 1 and 12 January, and 1 and 18 March 1971.

In the locality, there was substantial agitation mainly in Edmonton and Enfield. The IS was running quite a few workplace bulletins, at MK Electric, Thorns, the incinerator building site and so on. We put the line. Alan Watts did his bit on the AEU District Committee and I was by then the Secretary of the HTUC. We were able to argue our case for Councils of Action but no CoAs were set up. There was a well attended march in January 1971 and a huge rally in the now demolished Regal Cinema on the corner of the North Circular Road. It was well covered in the local papers.

A form of unity

Perhaps more important from our point of view was a joint meeting of the IS and CP. The CP were very strong and this was a major achievement. Of course Bill Neary was in their camp but he was becoming disillusioned. He told me once that the CP had no contact with him apart from elections where he went out to deliver leaflets. This was a criminal waste. He was a conscientious shop steward in the furniture factories and the key person on the HTUC. He was victimised on more than one occasion for putting the union line but he kept going. He died in the early 1990's.

We put our line at the meeting, through Chris D who, sadly, came late. My notes do not give any details of any deep debate, so the meeting probably went off satisfactorily. We were establishing our reputation as serious revolutionaries and active union members.

LCDTU again

A year later a LCDTU conference on 8 April 1972 decided that only industrial action would stop the threat and called for the TUC to take action against any instructions from the new National Industrial Relations Court. In the event, three railway unions submitted to orders for a "cool off" and ballot within a month. So much for the TUC's determination.

The actions of our IS group nationally and locally were not central to events. We tried to get delegated to the LSSDC meetings and to speak at them. There was always a leaflet distributed because the CP took care to exclude our leading comrades. Our policy was to argue that Councils of Action, CoAs, should be set up in each locality. These would act as a focus of activity and a useful line of communication.

Words and meanings

Some definitions are needed at this point. CoA's were local committees made up of anyone who wanted to join, including LP members and union FTO's whose motives were often to control the thing by offering to lead. It should be made clear that CoA's were not soviets or workers councils. In

its literature on the General Strike, for example, the CPGB sought to blur the distinction and pretend they were. There is no doubt that this fact, together with the stupid policy of calling for all power to the TUC, were a significant factor in the defeat in 1926.

Workers councils are in the first instance workplace bodies, comprising sectional delegates or shop stewards, who are recallable by the workers and responsible to mass meetings or assemblies. These councils often exist as joint shop stewards committees in stable times and become politically active at times of crisis. In the UK, while JSSC have been common, workers councils existed in WW1, in the movement largely founded by the Socialist Labour Party.

The second level of organisation is the area council, comprising workplace delegates, which are usually called soviets, from the Russian word, [Woodward]. Soviets comprise delegates from workplaces who have the power to stop production and hence paralyse capitalism. They are a key mechanism for the assault on State power that is the essential second stage in the revolution. Their existence is critical to revolutionary movement in action. There is ample evidence of their degeneration in post 1917 Russia [Ratner]

SLG

Worker councils are the base unit of the political revolution. The Socialist Libertarian Group believes that the liberation for workers introduced by such councils is fundamental to the building of a socialist society and that Lenin's action in compulsorily merging them into Party controlled unions, was the start of the degeneration in Russia in 1917 [Smart].

CoA's are a type of half way house but could lead on to Soviets and as such would be a big step forward when compared to often moribund trade [union] councils or other official bodies. In the UK, some CoA's had been set up in the move against British intervention in the USSR, in General Strike and during the agitation against new dole Regulations in the 1930's. We argued for them at every opportunity, usually by leaflet.

Conference

Back to the narrative - at the June 72 Conference, we had a small number of delegates, including myself. We had leafleted delegates and put in speakers slip but I was the only comrade who got to the platform. How it happened is like this. The officers were all CP - Bill Neary of Haringey Trades Council was the treasurer and assistant secretary of the LCDTU, though Jim Hiles, of the building workers Joint Sites Committee, was Chair and Kevin Halpin, an ex Ford's shop steward who had been victimised in 1962, was Secretary. Strangely Hiles also lived in Tottenham, or at least had a Tottenham address, but despite numerous visits, I never found him in. I think his mum got quite fed up with my attentions.

At this particular conference, Halpin, who was the executor of the CP instructions, was absent and Bill took over as secretary. My slip went in as delegate from the HTUC and as such Bill did his best to get me in. He handed my slip on to the Chair and I was called to deliver my speech. It was the standard IS line, repeating the leaflet, but not delivered with the rousing calls for solidarity that go down so well at these gatherings but are useless as a guide for action. I am not a bad public speaker but my contribution went down like a lead balloon. I did get reported in *SW* but nowhere else.

Crisis

The crisis came over the summer. A LCDTU conference on 10 June called for a national stoppage on 5 September and solidarity for unions under attack. In fact, events made these plans irrelevant. Five London dockers, in what seemed a re-run of the 1951 case that ended "war time" laws, were imprisoned and spontaneous strikes broke out all over the country. This was a major crisis, the unions versus the Government. Again in what seemed a repeat of the 1918 crisis where union leaders had backed down before Lloyd George's challenge to take over the country or withdraw, the LCDTU kept silent.

Response

Fortunately many shop stewards didn't, and the strike wave became so large that the TUC was forced to call its own action for a stoppage. Subsequently it claimed to be leading the fight but it was, and always has been, guided by a desire to undermine independent workers action in favour of parliamentary manoeuvres. As Tony Cliff often said, the full time union leadership is like a rusty wheelbarrow, it'll go only as far as you push it strongly, then stops. In the event, the Government released the men and another anti union law bit the dust. The September strike was rendered irrelevant.

CP caught in their own contradiction

The question for many SS, union militants and socialists is why did the Communist controlled LCDTU cop out? The answer essentially is that they saw their role as putting on pressure to reform the system, not to oppose, and end it. When faced with workers taking action to resist capitalism, the CP policy, for many decades and in all countries, was to simply back off. A possible revolution was not their agenda, though it was no doubt for many of their members. The Party line was clear, no challenge to the State, no revolution, no end to capitalism, just a few modest improvements.

Seen against this background, the role of the LCDTU is quite understandable [Darlington]. Eventually the contradiction between a potentially revolutionary, industrial membership and a reformist leadership was one of the forces that were to break the CPGB wide open.

Back to 1917 and Russia revolution

Time perhaps for a digression on the nature of the "Soviet" bloc. Even the briefest look at the history of the international workers movement reveals a picture of degeneration, even by their own standards. As the Russian "Soviet State" deteriorated into a regime of state capitalism soon after the revolution, the world wide network of Communist parties, controlled through the Moscow Comintern, were manipulated into policies that suited Stalin's backers. The international movement became a vehicle for Russian nationalism. The USSR's need for allies overrode all workers actions and interests. In China, the disastrous alliance with Chang Kichek resulted in tens of thousands of communist revolutionaries slaughtered in a lost revolution. Stalin then organised a city wide revolt, certain to be defeated but enough to promise success for the campaign to exile Trotsky. In the event, the cynically organised revolt was ruthlessly put down and hundreds - if not more - killed.

Spanish complicity

In Spain, the workers responded to a Fascist take over bid by seizing workplaces and land, breaking open the prisons and disarming the regular troops. This was complete in Catalonia and its surrounds. The Anarchists effectively held power but refused to go beyond their formula of a general strike. The Communists, instructed by the state capitalists USSR leaders not to upset France and the UK, reversed the revolution, re-instated the bosses, physically killed off the Anarchists and Trotskyists. Franco with aid from Hitler and Mussolini would have won anyway but the Spanish CP ensured humiliation as well as defeat. [Orwell & Woodward 11]

Britain

In the UK the record had been less spectacular, but equally pathetic. In the 1926 General Strike, the CPGB was anxious to work with the "left" union leaders and demanded "All Power to the TUC General Council". The TUC of course caved in and the strike collapsed to everyone's relief except the working class. The CPGB had predictably been duped into backing the very people who betrayed the strike. In a unique example of prediction, Trotsky generally anticipated the events in his writings at that time. At the start of WW2, the CPGB twice changed its line. The war was at first designated as "anti Nazi", then an imperialist stunt and finally back to a war for democracy again when the Soviet Union was attacked. Industrial policy followed the zig-zag. Strikes were encouraged then virtually banned in a productivity war drive to save the Joe Stalin and the USSR [Birchall 74].

New version

Since the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, there has arisen a new apologetic theory about the CPGB. This says that the disastrous effects of Stalinism were really only secondary because the main role was to lead the industrial struggle. The war time experience exposes this nonsense. The Stalinist policies over-ruled industrial policies at every stage. Commitment to Joint Production Committees and anti strike policies were clearly a result of

political decisions, in the UK , USA, etc, to defend the USSR. Industrial policy was secondary to the political one.

1956

The repression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 saw the end of international cohesion and more importantly any credibility of the leaders who had covered up both the current and the past horrors. Meanwhile the Shop Stewards movement, especially strong in the AEU changed [Frow]. Since the 1930's, it had always kept a balance between representing the interests of the FTO's and the rank and file, in that order. Now the emphasis swung heavily towards the bureaucracy, union elections and the "Left" leadership.

Tactics

"Broad Lefts" were set up to win political control of unions by manipulating legitimate grievances. A delicate balance was established to not upset the reformist union leaders but placate the R&F. The Party had long since abandoned any pretensions to being a revolutionary party to bring in a new society, it functioned very largely as a wing of the reforming union leadership. The nature of the CPGB has been characterised as a mixture of industrial militancy and syndicalist politics.

Events

Coming back from the wide ranging overview to the subject of anti union laws, it can be seen that workers had now fought off two attempts at legislating against them. The movement had definitely gained strength in the process despite the ominous failure of the LCDTU. The third offensive by Thatcher was to more successful, but that is another story

Issues

Another manifestation of the conflict between the governments and workers in this period centred on the fashion for "productivity deals". This was the old fashioned drive to increase work intensity, which has always been at the forefront of employer's priorities. More production = higher profits = better dividends and investment = greater competitiveness and more business, and so on, so the theory runs. The equation of a market exchange of wages for labour hides the persistent pressure to get workers to work harder as well as longer. It is a feature of nearly all union practice that the amount of work done should be controlled by the worker, both as a means of dividing out the available work and stabilising income. Work performance can also be a powerful weapon as exemplified by the canny, or work to rule.

The PD pattern began in the early 1960's. The effects were becoming clear after a few years and there were moves against new deals. The Fawley Refinery Agreement for example had been the pioneer in 1960 but within 7 years, wages at the site were at the bottom of the local wage table. The IS campaigned in the traditional way and Tony Cliff wrote an agitational book, on the same lines as his effort on the pay regulation.

These were not political, not even very historical, just straightforward union oriented material. A lot of the information was collected in the Midlands and the book, *Productivity Deals and How to Fight Them*, was a best seller.

Local support work

Locally the IS branch moved into top gear. I was quite heavily involved in building its sales among industrial contacts that I had made in recent years. For the first time there was a systematic programme of contact visiting. This was done by the newly recruited members as well as the old hands. After the directional change where the IS "Turned to the Class", there were hosts of new people, usually of the same class composition as previously, white collar and ex students. Despite their inexperience - many were teachers and the like - new people were soon able to sell the book.

Virtually everyone was visited and the reception was better than some had anticipated. Some industrial contacts were recruited but the main effect was to increase the respect for the IS. The local branch set up a public meeting but no details are recorded in my notebooks as to its success. The best, indeed the only easily available socialist book, on work intensity over the last hundred years is the mis titled *Sabotage* by Geoff Brown.

Management methods

Over the decades, management have sought to increase work intensity, by work study, Bedaux systems, payment schemes and so on. The Production Committees of WW2, were only partly about incorporating shop stewards, the rest was production needs. In the 60's, there was a wave of productivity deals or PDs. These essentially involved employers agreeing to better pay increase at a time of wage regulation in return for workers agreeing to abandon hard won work practices. In reality, there were many "phoney" PD's - where there was agreement to carry out fictitious duties, etc - but the real damage was done to the steward's negotiating power. The agreements always meant a plant level arrangement rather than stewards covering their sections. Once this was gone, an important reason for directly elected union reps went as well.

It had been a crucial feature of the long boom that wage levels were either negotiated at section level, or substantial pay additions were gained by stewards. "Wage drift", or "wage drive" as Cliff called it, made up a considerable part of private sector manual workers pay packet. This too would now end. Proposed by Jack Jones of the T&GWU, the new "plant bargaining" had the effect of cutting the shop stewards power to a substantial degree.

Jack Jones and government instructions

Plant level agreements resulted in Senior stewards, often full time, taking over from stewards. Usually these deals were productivity based, which again moved power upwards. Nearly all union FTO's were keen on PD's,

be they of the left or right variety, as they of course did not have to work harder, or suffer the effects of the deals.

Productivity deals also had an adverse effect on unemployment. This was not the crucial issue it was to become later but the consequence was noted. In those days, PD meant "strings" attached to pay, like no tea breaks, or introducing shift work, or ending assorted "restrictive [actually defensive] practices". Worst of all was the Measured Day Work that was to radically affect mines, car factories and so on. In the 1990's, a much larger wave of PD's were to come in, but this time largely imposed by dominant management. These were often termed Human Resource Management, and given a gloss of "involvement" or "empowerment". More on this later.

The organisation of the International Socialists

Meanwhile there was the development of the political organisation, the IS, which was now more formalised as both the struggle and the membership grew. From the earliest times, it seems, decisions had been taken at the Working Committee which met at Cliff's house on Monday nights. A proper system of a national committee was set up, and I was on it. This met on Saturdays and took decisions on issues of the day. An Industrial Sub Committee, ISC, was established, to meet on the Sunday morning, comprising the rapidly growing numbers of industrial comrades. I was secretary of this, receiving letters, preparing reports and such like. Many leading comrades came to these meetings and it was an intended model as part of a fully grown revolutionary party.

After a year or so, the party was ready to appoint a full time industrial organiser. A comrade had been appointed as a full time officer in ASTMS but was being booted out by the national union. Clearly a person of some ability, he was duly installed. His name was Roger Rosewell. He had originally been in the Metal Mechanics union in Kingston, the Young Socialists and an IS member. He gathered around himself some keen young ex-students and the Industrial work became more systematically organised with full time workers. I resigned and the new regime began to function, without any ill feeling. In this Rosewell regime were Dave Lyddon and Howard Medwell, both of whom were to outlast their leader in socialist terms.

After some years in revolutionary politics, Roger Rosewell was to go on to take an increasingly right wing position, through involvement in the Electrical Trades Union, ETU, and still further rightwards. He became a Tory. In the 1990's, his brief moment of fame came as an adviser to Shirley Porter in the Westminster Council vote rigging scandal. He remains the most extreme case of renegadism from the IS/SWP.

In this section I have covered the tumultuous events of these years and looked at the Industrial policy. The role of the CPGB is looked at as it degenerates into a reforming and syndicalist organisation. The case for workers council communism is introduced and the changing industrial structure of the ISG is described

This chapter examines the high levels of union organisation in Coventry workplaces, the Social Contract and the Right to Work campaign. The rank and file organisation is examined. Development in the IS/SWP are looked at briefly, including the national crisis. The period covered runs from 1974 and the move to the right in the class and in society, which is symbolised by the election of the Conservatives in 1979.

My move into education had a touch of good luck about it. I had applied to do a Diploma in Trade Union Studies at Enfield Tech, following IS comrade John Philips, the IS national secretary, who had taken it the previous year. I had been refused a grant. However, I came home mid afternoon one day in October 1972, to attend a meeting as Haringey TUC delegate to the local Employment Office. The phone rang while I was getting changed and it was the Council saying a grant was now available, did I still want to study? I did, and went up to the Tech next day.

The course was made up of union members going into higher education and graduates seeking further qualifications. I sat between the 2 groups and my role soon emerged as liaison with the black students. The lectures were quite low level, though I did write one essay attempting to show how I thought Marx was superior to Keynes. The tutor commented "Interesting". One event was notable during this year. There were speakers at special union style meetings and one of these featured a peace movement activist called Harry Newton, who was a CP member. He was very dismissive of revolutionary politics and I had quite a row with him. Some years later, it was realised that it fact he was an M.I.5 agent who had passed over vast amounts of information. I think I won that debate even if it took some years to be recognised. Anyway, I passed the course and got a Distinction. Encouraged, I applied to go to Warwick University and after an interview with Hugh Clegg was accepted, amazingly.

So in 1973, I went to Warwick in Coventry to take a Master of Arts degree in Industrial Relations. The course imposed minimal requirements - three essays a term - and this left plenty of time for reading .. However, I made each of my essays a project and read around the subject to establish a revolutionary perspective. They are still interesting some 20 years later.

A colleague from Enfield also came along, Helen Miller, She was later I understand to commit suicide.

Union job

One interesting phenomena was that I was elected "shop steward" for the students, not very onerous except that there was a complaint against Richard Hyman who was taking the course while Hugh Clegg, who had been the main author of the Donovan report, went off on some government duty. Basically he was pitching his lectures at too high a level, people

couldn't take notes fast enough. Anyway we had a meeting and he agreed to prepare a summary sheet for each lecture. Later he wrote his book on *Marxism and Industrial Relations* from these lectures and notes .

Finance

However a more pressing problem was my financial situation at this time. Though Maureen was by now working as a teacher, I only got a small grant, just about enough for my accommodation, though the fees were also covered. I had to get some paid work.

One of the local IS members was the organiser for the Workers Educational Association, Peter Caldwell, so I asked him if there was any union education work. Through this I came into contact with Jim S who was also doing his M.A., part time in his case. Jim worked in a college at Solihull doing union education courses and I managed to get a job there the following summer, though this did mean a trip into Birmingham every day. This seems a curious situation - a separate workplace from the residential area - and for me the consequences were that I was active politically in Coventry while my union contacts were generally in Birmingham.

In the first instance, Jim and I shared a course, with him taking the morning and me the afternoon. One day I couldn't get a child minder so I brought Dave and Peter in and they sat relatively quietly at the back. The stewards were sympathetic.

Problems with CP

An interesting situation arose from another of my WEA courses. This was a small evening course based in Castle Bromwich, a huge working class estate in East Birmingham, and was entitled *The Future of Industrial Relations*. Naturally my political views on Russia as a state capitalist regime emerged from the course summary and I used the example of the Polish coal that had been imported into the UK as an attempt to break the miners strike in this connection.

This severely upset the leading CP member in the AEU, one Phil Higgs, who complained bitterly. Phil Higgs was a very competent union convenor at Rolls Royce Parkside, Coventry, and District committee member. Peter Caldwell relayed the news of the complaint but I still did work for him. Also the AEU Birmingham East District Secretary, a bloke called Ken Cure was upset by my courses a bit later. He was very right wing and was to become prominent on the AEU National Executive later on. Higgs wrote a very illuminating chapter in Ronald Fraser's book on *Work*, volume 1

John Spellar, MP

Later on when I was teaching in Birmingham I managed to annoy an ETU official who later turned out to be one of the more right wing Ministers in the Blair government. Some EETPU stewards complained about the union attitude on health and safety. I pointed out, truthfully, that since the union had gone right wing there was practically no provision of information on issues like this. He complained but it was the truth so they did nothing.

So I managed to upset the CP, the full time officers and the right wing, I must have been doing my job properly.

On the move

The whole Woodward family had moved up over the summer of 1974. It took some months to get sorted out but by 1975 I was able to become politically active. At the same time as this, there were two other newcomers in the Coventry IS group. Murray A had been active in the teachers union and researcher, in Scotland but came down as the full timer for the party. John H was a student activist, now a teacher. The three of us plus branch activist Paul S came into the local organisation and were pretty appalled at what we found.

Local activity

The industrial work generally at this time reflected the national priorities with the Right to Work campaign and to a certain extent the various national strikes against the incomes policy, now going under the disguise of a Social Contract. There was the occasional one off strike and some anti racism, though this was a local issue but the main thrust was in the well organised Coventry workplaces. This included the workplace or union "factory branches".

These were also part of the growth of the industrial membership of the IS. Its largely student and white collar members had been supplemented by an influx of manual workers. The organisation of Party members into Party fractions had proceeded apace, with some 20 being manual worker shop stewards, 12 white collar union reps, 25 as union branch officers and a few dozen active above that level, according to an IS national survey of membership. As with all such figures their accuracy must be not taken as final but the trend is clear.

The years 1970 to 1977 were to see the Group's promotion of a national rank and file organisation, the NR&FO Committee. After an initial IS Conference in Birmingham in 1972, there were three major NR&FO Conferences, two in 1974 and an attempted re-launch in 1977.

Rank and file journals

The first of these, the evidence of the success of the R&F newspapers can be seen. There were delegates from at least 22 NHS union bodies, 10 from NUPE and 4 each from ASTMS and COHSE, many presumably as a result of the *Hospital Worker*. *Car worker* influence may have resulted in 24 motor industry branches and 11 JSSCs. There were 51 applications from metal working parts of the AEUW, and sales of 9,000 copies of a pamphlet on that year's pay claim no doubt assisted. 37 T&GWU bodies attended at least 6 from London bus garages where the hand of the *Platform* could be discerned.

In education there were 22 branches of the ATTI - teachers in technical colleges - and 12 from the NUT, plus two from the Scottish EIS. All these had R&F papers. The same was true of 29 NALGO and 12 CPSA

branches. There was representation from ASTMS, NUM, UCATT, TASS, and print unions. 19 trades union councils attended. A total of 36 JSSCs were there as well as on group of workers occupying their workplace, Strachans.

R&F movement as such

I have dwelt at length on the attendance because there has been a tendency to write off the NR&FOC. I think it can be seen as having the support of many workplaces, workplace union and geographical branches, etc. Another feature of this period was the launch of many Rank and File groups with their own newspapers. These were national organisations far bigger than our earlier APEX ACTION. The recorded figures for their circulation are in the table 2 below from Callinicos.

Table 2

<u>Rank and File paper</u>	<u>Number of issues</u>	<u>Print order</u>
Building Worker	6	2,000
Car worker	9	6,000
Case Con [Social workers]	4	5,000
Collier	6	5,000
Dock Worker	12	5,000
Electricians Special	3	2,000
GEC Rank and File	5	8,000
Hospital Worker	7	6,000
Journalists Charter	4	2,000
NALGO Action News	8	6,000
Platform [bus workers]	3	3,000
Rank and File Teacher	13	10,000
Redder Tape	4	3,000
Scots Rank & File Teacher	3	2,000
Tech Teacher	4	2,000
Textile Worker	1	1,500

Tony Cliff's autobiography points out that there were in addition other journals such as *Steelworker*, *Printworker*, *Post Office Worker*, and so on. My own contribution to the *Tech Teacher's* success was not great. I was working in a college effectively squeezed out by the authorities and CP, and I do not recall any success in selling the paper or advancing organisation. I was there principally to talk to the stewards in classes.

Rank and File movements can either be aimed at influencing the official union structure, or acting to exist independent of the official organisation. The former strategy is typical of, say, the Unofficial Miners Reform Movement in the early years of the century, and the latter by the Shop Stewards and Working Class movement during the year of WW1 and after. This made clear its attitude when it stated it would support the officials as

long as they represent the workers but would act independently immediately they misrepresent them.

The CP and its bodies

The National Minority Movement, set up in 1924, was at the severe disadvantage of operating in a situation when there was mass unemployment and known activists were generally sacked. Up to 1928, it operated under the auspices of the CPGB but when the Moscow line of the Communist International adopted the divisive sectarian policy of the Third Historical period, it was ended.

The CPGB had from that period practised a policy that attempted to get the support of the trade union leadership while encouraging rank and file militancy. These conflicting elements were bound to be disastrous in the end and the performance of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions in the 1971 crisis was to expose the deficiency.

It was this dereliction that prompted the IS initiative and the NR&FOC. After an opening success, the defection of the shop stewards, by the support of the Left union leadership of Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones, would lead to its early demise. Of course the class struggle went on, and the role of socialists to supplement workers organisation was still there. This was a period of considerable action on the shop floor by shop stewards but the loss of a national organisation can only be seen as the last gasp of the CPGB and its reformism.

ISG and its union dissidents

Anyway, back in Coventry in 1976, the "factory branches" had gone, and we were back working largely from outside with just a few members inside. This was one of the problems. In the local party there was a layer of young workers from the factories, and these were joined by some ex students. The political orientation of these comrades was exclusively towards the struggle in local union structure, and then the union struggle in the workplaces.

No distinctive politics

They had no revolutionary perspective and not much of one regarding rank and file work either. The leader of this group was Roger Kline who had been the full timer worker for the IS in the previous period. He was a real high flyer, a member of the Executive [Central] Committee, and author of two well publicised booklets on the pay freeze, and socialism and parliament. Also in the leadership was Peter Caldwell, the WEA organiser. The politics of the group were centred on the workplace in general and on health and safety in particular.

Health and safety Committee

A Coventry based committee had been set up, CHASM. H&S was a key issue for the CP at this time, seen as a means of politicising shop stewards whose main concern had been pay. They were also keen on getting

positions in the union branches. The politics of this group were influenced by the CP, and distinct from the IS as such.

Right to Work March

The actual issue over which the internal struggle first came to a head was the Right To Work, RTW, March in the spring of 1976. The IS in Coventry had done virtually nothing of the preparatory work, no workplaces visited for delegations or financial help, no arrangements for the day of arrival, etc. Worse than this, Peter Caldwell had actually called two union education schools on the two Saturdays in March when the marchers were in Coventry and when the final London rally occurred. This double booking device was a CP tactic as we had found in the anti Vietnam war campaign. Essentially the RTW activity did not figure in their politics.

So sides had to be taken as the divergent politics of the two groups became clear. The issue centred on the validity of the RTW and the National Rank and File Organising Committee that had called it.

"Independent" - of the union structure

Should this be IS based, or should it be "independent?" The issue of "independence" had been adapted from the policy of the WW1 Shop Stewards who had proclaimed their independence, but in their case, quite correctly from the national union structure. The other side in the current dispute stressed the need for independent workplace organisation, as much, if not more, from the IS as from the FTO's. This was a clever adaption of tactics, and obviously from the CP source. It was a policy whose time was running out, with the decline of workplace organisation, though neither side knew this at the time.

The split in the ISG

So this was the line up. For the IS traditional line, there was myself, Murray and John, and partners Maureen, Gail and Pat respectively - with Gerry, a long standing car worker, and four lecturers. These were John and Chris, and Janis and Paul, the latter of whom politically sided with us but whose personal friendships were with the others.

The "others" were Roger Kline, and three WEA organisers - Peter, Richard, and Paul - also Steve, Mal and Andy, three students who had become manual workers. Also John and Alan S were among the group of Coventry workers who went along with this type of politics. Alan C was an academic who gave support to this group, I think.

There was a third group who quoted Hegel to show that both the main protagonists were wrong. Pat a technician, and John F a full time union officer, made up this group. John was a friend of a SWP full timer John C with whom he remained in contact over several decades. There were in addition large numbers of members who were passive regarding the dispute. Richard Lees who was later to become the Labour Party Leader on Manchester Council was one of these, though he left for the North about this time

The national dispute

At a national level, there was a sharp battle over the nature of the *Socialist Worker*. There was a problem with Birmingham AEU members as well. of which more below. The Coventry dispute however did not relate directly to the national issue then being fought out. The opposition were ignoring the RTW and had immersed themselves deeply in the local union bureaucracy. It was typical of the "reformist syndicalism" position of the CPGB in their terminal decline. Moreover those who made up our side were not hard-line Cliff-ites, as our subsequent history shows. The full implications of the national dispute are examined below but the point of difference needs to be established here. The issues were not related, or linked or seen to be, by either side.

Leadership

Indeed it seems curious but the IS leaders seemed almost to take a neutral line. Even Paul S seemed to be taking a middle line. When Jim Nicol came up to speak on the issue, having stayed with Paul overnight, he seemed to be supporting Roger Kline though this possibly reflected the latter's recent position on the central national organisation of the IS.

It was a curious position for me to be in. Previously I had said to Tony Cliff that I was a rank and file revolutionary, but he had correctly pointed out that every revolutionary is a leader. I had meant that I was not seeking to be a leader., indeed Ian Birchall had said he thought that I was not really believer in the Party. Though I had some reservations about the role of the Party, as it was defined, especially after the post 68 debates, I had no conscious ideas of alternative politics at the time.

Internal fighting

Yet here I was engaged in a debilitating internal struggle for the central politics of the ISG locally, though this is only a partial contradiction. For months nearly everything was sacrificed to the faction fighting. John and I spent hours on the phone and Murray did his best to keep the party together. Finally the others cracked. We were left in the leadership while they took over our role as the minority, before leaving altogether.

Later

It is interesting to trace the subsequent careers of the warriors. On our side, John, Murray, Paul, Gerry and myself are still active in political matters, of some kind, even in the new century. It is worth noting that each of us have children who have been, or still are, SWP members. John is a teachers' union leader. Peter Binns who had been on our side, was editor of the theoretical journal *International Socialism* for some years before dropping out of politics and into business ethics

For the "others" they have all left formal political activity as well as the IS. Peter and Richard remain as WEA organisers, Paul works in television. Steve became an academic but died of cancer, Andy retired to the country. Roger Kline became a union information worker then a leading

full time official in a health service union. He has been steadily moving to the right. I have some contact with him and Richard, and relations are still amicable. Paul is friendly with at least one of the others. I spoke to Roger Kline in one of our many passing meetings at the TUC in Great Russell Street about the Coventry events but he did not want to discuss the issue or contribute to any assessment.

Two university lecturers also figure in the line up with the others. Richard Hyman resigned a short while later when the IS became the SWP, saying he would state his reasons in a document but never did. He has been active in *Capital and Class*, and writes in academic journals. James Hinton had resigned, in his case just prior to the bust up but came back in to assist Kline and co. He resigned, again, with the rest of them but he has remained on good terms since then. Curiously he was known to be speaking at a CP Historians meeting in 1979, and has associated more openly since then. He spoke at an SWP meeting on the subject of *Banning the Bomb* or was it *The Shop Stewards Movement* in the early 1980's, and was quite friendly.

The dispute dragged on for over a year and was very damaging to other work. It dominated everything, was stressful in personal terms and must have been unacceptable to others outside the immediate circle of disputants. Once it was all over, everyone was relieved.

General Strategy 1 - The mythical ISG factory branches

The work of the IS branches at this time posed some interesting questions. Just prior to events outlined above there had apparently been three factory or workplace branches - the thing everyone was aiming at - in the area. One in Chrysler, one in GEC and one in Jaguar. There had been an IS Conference decision to aim for workplace branches in 1973 and it seems that this had resulted in their formation but these had collapsed before 1974. The figure from the IS claimed a total of 40 members in 1975 however.

In reality ?

Personally I am unsure that the Coventry ones existed in any meaningful way, except at the Chrysler factories. An article had appeared in the IS journal 64, November 1973, about the Chrysler scene, written by Peter Caldwell and a long standing member Gerry on the basis of information given by John W, the AUEW Deputy convenor. It was signed Peter Jones from their names. The article talks about Chrysler IS in recent disputes and gives brief details about its role. A booklet was written but is now lost in obscurity.

It is difficult to assess the significance of these branches. Of course all socialists are in favour of building workplace organisation at the point of production but I have now concluded with the benefit of hindsight, that political workplace branches are not always the best way to achieve this at

first. Historically the old CPGB moved to placing workplace structures as their preferred option after the moves to Bolshevise the Party in 1922. This had been made all the harder because Moscow had selected the BSP to lead the Party instead of the workplace orientated and 'Bolshevik' type traditions of the SLP. The BSP was solidly reformist and parliamentary based. There were early problems because of this, and the victimisation of many shop stewards into unemployment was neglected.

Classic model

Such reports as do exist [McIlroy], tell of the role of factory branches as being the weekly meetings, where subs were paid, Party circulars and instructions read, and plans made for agitation on Party campaigns. This is a classic example of substituting itself for the workplace union organisation in a Party dominated way. McIlroy records little progress being made, unsurprisingly. The Communist "picture palace" Party - "programmes changed twice a week" - resulted in problems of credibility, not aided by workplace branch dissolution in 1945 and a steady drift towards parliamentary orientation.

Later the IS took up this misdirected form of organisation, which did not match the success achieved in London, but nothing about the Coventry branches. We carried on with our work and the Party organisation reached a very high level. In Coventry, each of the four or five IS branches sent a delegate to the District Committee where local decisions were made. There were regular report backs.

The IS organisation system in practice

We prepared written perspectives for the District which were discussed extensively and comrades were given specific responsibility for areas of work. Aggregates of all members were held every 6 months, with written perspectives and reports, and plenty of contributions from the floor. This was in sharp contrast to the practice in later periods where dissent was squashed and the Party line was endlessly repeated. Educational meetings were organised and discussion groups held in members homes. Since we had our own book shop there was always a good supply of literature.

A degree of members control

Murray, John and I made sure that Party organisation that was accountable and did try to effectively relate, in the absence of the workplace units, to the shop floor organisation at the time in Coventry. A number of forms of organisation were tried, based on the cell system. The branch was attached to a workplace and did the SW sale. We kept in touch with the member or contact inside the workplace and every so often wrote, typed, printed and gave out a bulletin/leaflet. These were supposed to display some inside knowledge and criticise the management. There was a political article on the back about a current issue.

Workplace leaflets

The significance of the bulletin was that it reached hundreds of people. *Socialist Worker* was a good newspaper for the time but it reached very few workers. Bulletins give a slice of our politics - and a relevant slice - to large numbers of organised workers. They do this in the context of collective activity, union action in the workplace, and should pose a revolutionary strategy to meet their consciousness. Bulletins are a key weapon for socialists and later I always included a session on bulletins on all my union reps courses.

The IS branch I was in, linked with the GEC factory, where a member, Paul worked. He was diligent in selling the paper and passing out information. The main interests of the GEC workers were pay and job security. Together with another Party member Aled, I wrote a booklet about the company, *Workers Fight Back* [1977, 24 pp] which was concerned with the union organisation. The presentation was somewhat crude but this was not modelled on the glossy "anti" reports that came out from Counter Information Services in London. These were professionally researched and printed, and were vastly superior in overall content. On the other hand, we did get 6 shop stewards to sponsor our document and it did relate closely to the Coventry factory. It was a genuine R&F publication.

Combine

There had been a GEC Combine of unions because the electrical multinational company had been in the forefront of the take over wave at the end of the 60's. Arnold Weinstock had bought up dozens of companies and either asset stripped, integrated or closed them down. Keith Blackmans of Tottenham had always fought against GEC and the owners had sought to make a take over legally impossible, but Weinstock found a way. He took what he wanted and then shut sites down.

For the workers who were left, the problem of equalising pay and conditions was a priority, especially occupational pensions. A Rank and File paper had been set up, in face of national union inactivity. This was quite strong in many areas but not Coventry, where conditions were generally good. I don't think there was much contact with the outside, the old Coventry paranoia again.

Chrysler

The Chrysler group in Coventry featured Gerry and Murray A and this was perhaps the key branch. There was contact with the Linwood stewards and the car industry generally was much more militant than general engineering. Regular bulletins were put in. Later Tony Cliff wrote a booklet [Cliff] which argued for factory occupations. By then, Murray was Industrial Editor of *Socialist Worker*.

Workplace control

A key feature of many Coventry workplace organisation was the gang system, mainly practised in the car factories. This had a long history and

the role of the shop steward as the actual person in charge of production was still the practice. Each gang would negotiate a price for a job, say performing a function on say, the car-body-in-white, and the work practices and duties were allocated out by gang members. This allowed for individual differences, job rotation, "light work" and so on. Payment of wages was also thereby union controlled. The management were effectively excluded by this practical example of workers control of work practice. It lasted into the 60's and was an important aspect of the role of the union steward [Wright] & [Fraser]

Veteran

One of the most able and committed protagonists of the Coventry shop stewards was Bill Warman. He had been a steward in various Coventry factories but most prominently at Standard Triumph, along with Phil Higgs. Both were in the CPGB, Bill having joined in 1937. As a full time officer in the Sheet Metal Workers Union , a position he was elected to after the national union sold out the 1956 strike, he worked for twenty years as a key organiser in the Midlands. His politics were Stalinist but at least his emphasis on the workplace organisation stood in contrast to Derek Robinson and his type . These were perhaps the strongest argument in favour of 'workers councils' .

On the wider front, workers were mobile and could change their place of employment every day if needs be to get the best rates. Such was the self confidence that when a strike was called to coerce a recalcitrant management, the normal practice was to not bother with pickets. The employers usually gave in after a few hours, or days. Coventry was probably the best organised place in the country, as well as having the highest paid workers. The CP was effectively in control and the *Morning Star* was sold in bulk from inside in some factories. Our outside sale of *SW* was insignificant by comparison. The CP control dated from the WW2 up to the 1980's when measured day work and mass unemployment ruined workplace unionism.

RR

At the aircraft engineering plant at Rolls Royce, Parkside for example, the convenor Phil Higgs was full time and the members of the Negotiating Committee each had a half day in the union office. There was a monthly meeting of all stewards in management time and a report back to members followed. A bulletin for union reps mainly was put out every month and this was made up of reports of various activities. The odd page from *Labour Research* magazine was included. Even though they were intended as a shop stewards bulletin, not for members, I kept copies for years as models for union reps on TUS courses.

There was no problem getting courses off the ground for RR union reps and I think the quality of some of the courses which I took were exceptional. At Rolls, the joint shop stewards committee (JSSC) for manual workers was

very well organised. There were weekly payments made by most workers to the JSSC Fund and this was substantial, more than the official union. Again it is a model for union reps. I used the "JSSC Standing Orders" on my TUS courses for years afterwards.

Staff organisation

The white collar workers were even better organised and supplied several national officers for the draughtsman's union, TASS, like Dick Jones as National President. Both groups had members that went onto high positions in the Labour movement. Phil Higgs was very capable and had he not been in the CP would have been at least an MP. As it was, he became a union full time official in the AEU in Coventry [Fraser]. Jim S came from Parkside into trade union education and by 1994 held the most prominent educational position in the movement, National Education Officer for what was to be UNISON, the massive public sector union amalgamation.

Others

Other workplaces were similarly as highly structured as Rolls. At Wickmans Tools the JSSC met every week and health and safety was meticulous. We found that out when the RTW Marchers went into the factory to demand a meal in the canteen. At Dunlop's, the workforce was recruited from miners who had relocated to Coventry from Wales or the North East and found their pit wages could be substantially increased by the move to the factory. The car factories were much better organised than the Birmingham ones. Longbridge shop stewards used to meet in the toilets until well into the 50's, I believe.

1970s

The 1970's were the high water mark on such organisation. By the end of the decade, shop floor power was weakening. This was illustrated when Derek Robinson was sacked from the British Leyland factory at Longbridge in Birmingham in November 1979. As a good CP member, he had functioned in the degenerated reformist way. He boasted about how many strikes he had stopped and had co-operated in the worker participation schemes. We had some of the Longbridge JSSC leaders on our courses at Solihull, all CP, mostly serious activists, some very good - it was the direction of the leadership of Robinson and the CP that subverted unionism.

CP bankruptcy

The CP had no concept of management's strategy of re-gaining workplace power "by sharing it", as academic writer Alan Flanders, had recommended. They did not see worker participation as a softening up exercise, and should have known that management are at their most dangerous when they are being nice. When management turned nasty - the Labour government had appointed Michael Edwardes in October 1977 precisely in order to be nasty - the CP stewards found their base had been

undercut. Re-reading the booklet that was the pretext for the "Red Robbo" sacking, I am struck by how modest it is. *"The Edwardes Plan and Your Job"* is 12 pages of anti redundancy union information, nothing mildly aggressive. The management justified their decision by a manipulated referendum and that was that.

Protest ? Rally

I remember sitting at the Birmingham rally for Robinson in January 1980 [?]. There was speaker after speaker, rallying call after rallying call, applause and cheers, congratulations and back slapping all round. Big names, MP's, FTO's, it was an all star performance. There had no idea of what had hit them. It was reminiscent of LCDTU conferences where nobody talked about perspectives or tactics, or making the links, they knew all the answers. It is sad to think that workers organisation had degenerated to this - saddest of all for the workers

Defeat

The union full timers were unable to stomach a fight - and out went Derek Robinson. This was the start of the attack on workers and Mrs Thatcher was soon to follow-up Labour's opening thrusts with an all out war. As with the adoption of monetarism, the Labour Party made the first move. People express surprise that Labour Party votes remained miserable for years or blame the winter of discontent on union members but even the more honest labour politicians have admitted the truth, that Labour opens hostilities against shop floor unions.

Leaflets in protest

In Coventry the CP tried to mobilise support but we put more leaflets into more workplaces over the Derek Robinson sacking. I saw the CP full timer, Tony McNally, leafleting on his own outside a factory - they had forgotten how to fight. It is rumoured that there was a short strike at Standards at Canley. This was a classic case of the thin end of a wedge, the thick part came in the 80's.

Back to the theme : Strategy 2

The second strand of industrial work was the Right to Work campaign. This had been one of the first actions of the National Rank and File Organising Committee, NR&FOC, which had been set up very largely by the IS. A national demonstration and lobby of parliament had been called by the NW Region of the TUC, and backed up by various union bodies. Despite a ban by the TUC, it was successfully held on 26 November 1975, and the NR&FOC planned a follow up march from Manchester to London in March 1976.

History

The original RTW movement had been set up in 1904 and there are pictures of their demonstrations showing banners reading "5 days work or 5 days Pay" and "Work or riot - one or the other". [Cox] It was part of the movement that forced parliament to introduce many social reforms.

Between the wars, the National Unemployed Workers movement had agitated for work and again got social reform. The mass action against the new dole rates in 1935 compelled the National Government to abandon its plans and find some better ones. A major problem with the NUWM was the isolation from employed union members. However, its "raids" on factories, invasions of hotels, demands for work, long distance marches through industrial Britain and aggressive demonstrations did give a model for others to follow.

Those without jobs

Unemployment is an essential part of capitalism. To get a living, workers must take their labour to the market, but of course to drive down the pay they get, there must be a surplus of labour. So the Tories have always been keen to ensure there is a mass of employment, "a reserve army of labour" to use Marx's words. This has been their policy consistently for 200 years, with the possible exception of 1945 to 70.

Of course, having solved that problem the next is finding a market for the articles produced. Workers are only paid for the value of about 30% to 40% of what they produce because the rest is profit, after overheads have been deducted. Hence, in crude terms, they can only buy 30% or 40% of produced items and these means there is a permanent tendency to over production, or under consumption if you prefer. A major article in *Socialist Worker* by John McSorley posed the situation nicely. As a car worker at the Ryton plant, he made hundreds of cars every day, but simply could not afford to buy one.

Abroad

Previously capitalism has used imperialism - selling and investing abroad - to boost its markets and since 1940, the war economy had been able to take a whole section of production out of the market, by arms manufacture. Both these solutions modified the boom - slump pattern of market instability. The adoption of state intervention into economic affairs, as advocated by Keynes, appeared to have consolidated the boom conditions but created other problems.

The tendency for the rate of profit to fall as fewer workers are employed to make a profit out of, is a further complication. From this thumbnail sketch of capitalism, it should be clear that unemployment and instability are built into the system. This means there is a permanent struggle for workers to maintain jobs as well as keeping wages up. The current crisis began to become serious at the end of the 1960's. Partly as a result of the productivity deals and the right to redundancy pay, unemployment had grown enormously .

Occupations etc

In 1971, the Upper Clyde work-in had a significant effect above and beyond the saving of thousands of ship building jobs. Up and down the country, workers occupied dozens of threatened workplaces, perhaps the

Fisher Bendix factory on Merseyside being the best known [Solidarity], though the Triumph motor bike factory at Meriden, just outside Coventry, was the best known example locally.

Many of these went onto become co-operatives, like the Triumph plant at Meriden. There were clearly political problems with these. It is not possible to defy the law of the market for very long. Little islands of collectivism become isolated in a sea of capitalism as the Portuguese workers found to their cost, after their revolution of 1975. However at the time, these were a major part of the mood of resistance, symbols of a determination to attack the methods of the bosses. As examples of a collective approach, they did not equal occupations but did represent some action at some level.

A campaign

It was this atmosphere that the IS re-launched the RTW movement. It was determined to get beyond the parliamentary approach of main stream labour and show that direct action - usually a March - was effective. It was based also on the unity with the employed union members. The eighty marchers set off from Manchester for London on 28 February, but there were constant diversions to "raid" workplaces or join pickets where strikes were in progress, at Manchester and Rugeley for example. On the spot demonstrations, leaflet distributions and fund raising were held. Yorkshire miners, union branches, trades union councils and Clay Cross Council, provided accommodation at various stages.

Arrival

So it was that the orange jackets arrived on the outskirts of Coventry on Friday 12 March. Only a few days previously, we had discovered that the industrial comrades had "failed" to get any reception for the marchers and there was just two of us "party liners" to meet them. The marchers had tried to get into Meriden without success and they needed somewhere to eat lunch. We took a quick decision. John Deason and some of the March Council went with me to try some local factories. We could not get in at Massey Ferguson but drove into Wickmans and located some stewards. Deason and co went off and I think it was agreed that the canteen would stay open for them. The astonishing part was that there was one steward at Wickmans who was in the IS at the time, though he was part of the "others". Later that day, the Chrysler stewards laid on a meal at the Social Club and accommodation was arranged. We had some more reliable members in there, including Gerry. The Chrysler JSSC banner went off with the marchers. Early next morning, we left for Rugby. We drove ahead in the van and a small deputation from the Rugby TUC were there to meet us and we paraded round the streets. I got an honorary orange jacket for the day for services rendered.

Exit

The marchers then went south. Some days later, the March was attacked by the police as it entered London, as the marchers in the thirties had been. Several marchers were arrested but acquitted after a publicised trial. There was graffiti about *Freeing John Deason* still visible for years afterwards. At the Final Rally in the Albert Hall, the speakers with Harry McShane a veteran from the NUWM, Paul Foot and Ernie Roberts, AEU, as speakers.

Subsequently

The RTW campaign went on for several years. For subsequent marches, we worked hard and got some marchers. The numbers never got beyond a few, as people who signed on usually got jobs within a couple of days, very mysterious. We set up a local committee, with some local union reps. Curiously one of the supporters was Dave Nellist, the Militant members who was later to become briefly MP for one of the south Coventry constituencies. I produced a RTW News bulletin which we tried to get circulated but the Coventry attitude of "it'll never happen to us" and political hostility from the CP/LP did present us with problems.

Still active

We recruited some youngsters, Martin and Colin who joined the Party and certainly assisted me in running the Foleshill bookshop. Finally in 1982, I ran the West Midlands Half Marathon, the Christmas Pudding Run, with Gerry, and got myself sponsored for RTW funds. It raised a few pounds anyway. My son Peter also ran, and took a much shorter time to complete the course

The second time . . .

There were lobbies of the TUC, many local demonstrations and meetings over the years. Later, in 1983, the TUC and CP tried a similar venture, The Peoples March for Jobs. This turned out to be abit like the Jarrow march in the 30's - a follow up by a much more conservative organisation, demanding charity not rights, and geared up for publicity.

To show that history does not completely repeat itself, this time the RTW remained the main event, unlike its follow up, which was a disaster. We tried to get some Coventry unemployed comrades on it but they were rejected ! There was no elected March Council and marchers were disciplined for shouting slogans. The CP fell out with the TUC. The whole affair was blatantly stage managed and quickly forgotten as the CP disintegrated.

Problems

Unemployment was by then assuming the dimensions of more than a social problem as Mrs Thatcher proceeded with her de-industrialisation programme. A series of strikes were to culminate in the miners "Coal Not Dole" year long strike of 1984 - 85. Labour and the Tories abandoned Keynesian economics, as did practically every government in the world.

New capitalism - or profit maximisation - was the new order. The consequences of this abandonment became apparent in the 1980's - mass unemployment, poverty which kills thousands every day in the Third World and no foreseeable way out of the crisis. Tony Blair echoes Harold Wilson's promise of technical salvation. Under *New Labour* we had the best trained unemployed in the world, but not much else.

Strategy 3

The third major element in IS/SWP activity of the 1970's was the opposition to regulation of pay by the *Social Contract*, or Social ConTrick as it was called. Wage control had been imposed by Wilson in 1966 and Heath had followed suit from 1970. Now Wilson was back after the electors decided that they preferred the Arthur Scargill view of things to that of the Conservative Party in the general election of 1974. Wilson's *Social Contract* had the support of Union leaders, the TUC and possibly significant groups of workers. This was because it was sold on the fairness idea, and the initial allowable amount was quite generous - a £6 weekly increase. It was a mark of the crisis that elements in the ruling class were preparing to "man" the barricades as they imagined a social crisis of terminal proportions. They need not have worried, Labour as ever, would bail them out.

ISg book

Tony Cliff had written his third book on wages and workers conditions, *The Crisis - Social Contract or Socialism* [1975, 192pp]. Although parts were similar to the earlier book, this was slightly more political. It had a wide ranging analysis of the CP and LP, and catalogued the full range of strikes, occupations, etc of recent years. It was written in 1974 and so anticipated the *Social Contract*, again showing some optimism about the workers resistance. It ends with a call for a revolutionary socialist party.

The major strikes of this period were Grunwicks and the most significant strike against the *Social Contract*, that by the firefighters. In conclusion, it was becoming clear by the end of the period that the crisis of the mid 1970's had faded and that the reaction had set in. The Labour Government had moved markedly to the right, along with the top union leaders like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon - once again the historic role of Labour had been fulfilled. The crisis had been averted. Workers response had been strong but increasingly patchy and the election of a "free enterprise" Tory party, the process was accelerated. The eighties had arrived.

Finally it is time to consider the major development in the national SWP. Earlier in this narrative, the move of the national organisation towards democratic centralism in 1968 has been noted, with my own modest opposition. That same year had seen the end of the old Working Committee system for a new National Committee, of which I was a member, and an Executive. I was also the Secretary of the Industrial Sub

Committee, which met on the Sunday, following the Saturday National Committee. This heard fraction reports, discussed union events and made plans for meetings and conferences.

The new system had the support, some passive, of the membership and there was a considerable advance in the influence of the IS. The National Rank and File Organising Committee had followed soon after the 1974 Industrial Conference. The role of the industrial comrades has been examined briefly in *Glorious Summer* by Dave Lyddon and Ralph Darlington and there had been a substantial number of workers recruited in the big unions. The major internal change had been the re-structuring in 1973 of the Executive Committee to include a number of provincial full timers who clearly had had little influence over the Centre. There had been some dissent over this.

New perspectives

The real discussion arose after the 1974 election where Tony Cliff revised the perspectives of the IS by proposing that the *Socialist Worker* - and hence the organisation - should be orientated around a younger generation of industrial workers rather than the traditional audience of workers active within shop stewards and union branch committees. This seems to have been the result of a dissatisfaction with the recruitment of members to the Revolutionary Party - the objective since 1968. Cliff had tried all sorts of initiatives to increase membership from Supporters Cards to recruitment "competitions" for full timers.

There was a substantial opposition to this plan. Several leading, and mainly long serving comrades - Jim [Higgins], John Palmer, Roger Protz, John Phillips, Granville Williams, the Birmingham full timer, Duncan Hallas, etc, formed a faction, the IS Opposition, to keep the perspectives much the same. This was about the future orientation of the IS, the nature of the party and its relation to workers organisation. Cliff for example was talking of a three month honeymoon of the Labour Government and the unions, while even Jim Higgins gave it six months. While both were palpably wrong, the internal issue of the IS was within this type of time scale.

and new structures

Firstly, the IS Conference again reformed the national organisation by establishing a Central Committee of full timers, with an Advisory Party Council, and new District organisation. This was a distinct post '68 move to centralise the Party which was not a critical issue in the dispute but revealed the real nature of the Cliff perspective.

Dissent

Secondly, among the opposition forces were large numbers of industrial activists who were not top level comrades [International Socialists Organisation]. Foremost among these was the 20 Birmingham AUEW members, in two factory branches. In accordance with IS policy they had been working the CP dominated Broad Left and had agreed to support Phil

Higgs as candidate for the post of National Organiser. This was probably the strongest of the CP Broad Lefts with Hugh Scanlon at its head. The SWP R&F grouping here was the Engineers Charter, in which our Birmingham comrades were active.

Suddenly they were confronted with a proposal to stand a Rank and File candidate in competition, as had happened more successfully in the entirely different EETPU. Predictably this placed them in a difficult position, as indeed the Cliff leadership had intended, because they were after all part of the Opposition. They were reluctant to back down and were expelled, oddly enough by Steve Jefferys, who was himself to be thrown out in 1984. He describes his version in *A Taste of Honey* which was published in the 1990's. He says the fate of the Birmingham metal workers was sealed because they backed the opposition in London. Among this group were Larry Connelly, AUEW convenor at the Lucas BW3 factory in Shaftsmoor Lane, Vic Collard, Larry Blewitt and Mick Rice who became the full time worker for the Birmingham Trades Union Council, but the fate of the rest is unknown. Steve Jefferys became an academic and dabbled, unsuccessfully it seems, in free enterprise.

Wider members

Thirdly about 150 members of the Opposition left or were expelled. Tony Cliff's representation of these as "demoralised" is typical of the characterisation of opposition as "tired socialists" is of course completely untrue but this allegation was to appear regularly over the years [Cliff] Large number of others, like Mike McGrath stayed in and indeed formed a faction the following year. *The Fraction for Revolutionary Democracy*, or FRED, was started by McGrath himself and the late Ross Pritchard who had been a key figure in the establishment of the Printshop. They collected around 150 signatures but were obliterated at the Party Conference.

Later

Of those who left, Jim Higgins remained in politics as a professional Trotskyist and has published *More Years for the Locusts*. He associated with *Revolutionary History*, a generally trotskyst organisation. He saw no fault in his role in promoting democratic centralism before being victimised by T Cliff. John Palmer built a career around the Labour party and the *Guardian* newspaper. Granville Williams was associated with the rank and file print organisation on the Press and Roger Protz writes on real ale with a possible link to Scargill's SLP. John Phillips left London to live in the provinces and is not active in politics.

Internal expulsion

Curiously it was not long before one of the journalist replacements on the new "workers" *Socialist Worker*, Laurie Flynn, was himself out of the party and remains hostile to it some decades later. He now believes that he was

wrong in 1969 and that we were right. The "workers" element in the paper did not appreciably improve.

Another group

There was another ideological battle about this time and I think on the same issue. In West London, a group had gathered around Harry Wicks, a veteran Trotskyist, and Peter Rowlands, a lecturer at Hounslow, later West Thames, College. The dispute ended with resignations ?? . Later, Harry Wicks wrote his autobiography - very interesting - and Peter Rowlands, remaining a NATHFE member at Hounslow College, became a councillor in Tony Blair's version of the Labour Party. He wrote what is I'm afraid an inadequate history of a local TUC with only short paragraphs on the Hounslow Hospital work-in and the Poll tax [Rowlands]. Hounslow Trades Union Council, which I attended briefly, deserved better than this. Overall, I was not involved with the dispute and picked up details later.

The events of 1973/6 can be seen as a move towards the strengthening of the role of the Party with regard to workers organisation. Lenin was now the flavour of the day, and everyday. This was not immediately apparent to me, which is my fault, as I preferred to think that the thing that mattered was the work with the class. Later I was to think out my politics more thoroughly. I would read more about workers council communism and link up my generalised dissatisfaction towards the SWP with a political critique. Before that the SWP was to be formally set up in 1977 and the peripheral work in various organisations like the Rank and File to be ended in 1982.

Behind the everyday events, the overall change from ad hoc group to Bolshevik modelled revolutionary group went on. This is looked at later

This chapter looks at the Wilson-Callaghan Labour government and the internal development of the IS/SWP. The framework of the Coventry labour movement and the role of the declining CP are the background for the Right to Work march and the third of Tony Cliff's book on work conditions. A significant change in the nature of the IS/SWP had also occurred which is examined in a later chapter.

Chapter Seven "The Internationale unites the human race"

This chapter, the first of the themes, covers my activities and attitudes regarding internationalism. It also comments briefly on national liberation struggles and looks more fully at anti racism, in practice mainly. Its time span is from the 1960's up to the 1990's.

Internationalism can be defined in terms of the common interests of working people over the world, as opposed to the linking of the interests of workers in one country with the rulers of that country, which is nationalism. Nationalism is the bosses reply to our politics. It is universally used and assumes an identity of interests of those in two economically conflicting classes, those who own and those who must work. It has launched a thousand wars, with an endless wave of illusions

In practice

Internationalism the issue falls into two dimensions - defending oppressed minorities in the situation at home and agitating for the rights of workers around the world to control their own lives, primarily from foreign domination and afterwards domestic exploitation. The first dimension concerns political action against home bred nationalism while the second opposes exported nationalism, or imperialism, or colonialism.

The first aspect requires political activity and it is most commonly manifest as anti racism but can go deeper. The second is largely a matter of solidarity from a distance but none the less important both in itself and for developing an overview of the political situation. The first dimension involves a straight forward political struggle to support workers who may be from a different country or be a different colour or race while the second is much more complex. The struggle for workers freedom is often closely bound up with national liberation movements, usually dominated by capitalist interests. The frequent result of anti colonial struggles is that a continued dictatorship, as one form of oppression is replaced by another type of political repression and economic exploitation. Moreover there are conflicting political ideas about attitudes to national liberation, and a change of the framework within which the struggle takes place.

In history

To start with the first component - the fight against racism has been central to socialist politics for generations. The tradition goes back in modern times at least as far as the Chartists, where black workers were active at all levels and William Cuffay was one of the deported leaders. In the USA, ethnic minorities were active in both unions and revolutionary groups from an early stage. *The Knights of Labour* was a multi racial organisation in the 1870's, though it quickly degenerated.

From the earliest days the ISG assumed what had in the past often been the role of the CP in defending ethnic minorities. In reality, over the years, the CP on a world stage had succumbed to nationalism and Stalinist USSR was rife with anti-semitism, for example. The French CP became associated with campaigns against North Africans and kept silent about pogroms in Paris in the 1960's. In UK and USA, the CP generally has a more honourable record.

Battles

The defence of Cable Street is perhaps the key issue here, notwithstanding the revelations of CP opposition covered so explicitly in Joe Jacob's *Out of the Ghetto*. In the early 1960's we joined anti fascist groups acting against Oswald Mosley in Hackney. Keeping Ridley Road market free of fascists was the objective here, especially in 1962. These were usually ritual skirmishes led by the militant Jewish defence groups, like the 43 group. There was also widespread racism in Labour Parties, and the Young Socialists challenged this head on. In East Islington, for example, the CLP was controlled by various union activists who were openly racist. Curiously enough, it was here that we saw the appearance of the fascists in disguise. They stood as New Liberals in April 1964, and though I still have their election address, I can remember nothing about any counter campaign we ran. They had set up a front body, the Islington Tenants and Ratepayers Association. It was part of the racist environment in Islington at the time.

Caribbean society

However, I was briefly involved with the setting up of the St Lucia Society, though the organiser Carl Ferdinand who lived close by in Bride Street., N7. It was a base for newly arrived immigrants from that island in the Caribbean to see a friendly face, get instant accommodation and start the search for jobs. I went to a few meetings and functions but moved out to Tottenham shortly afterwards.

CARD

In 1965, the ISG did set up an Islington branch of CARD, Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, in which a lawyer, Ian MacDonald, and Chanie Rosenberg, a long standing IS member, were prominent. In the long history of race relations in the UK, CARD is symbolic of a watershed between the passive and defensive attitude of anti racist organisations that prevailed from the turn of the century up to 1970, and the new more militant forms that followed. In this earlier period, there was a range of discrimination, often assumed and unthought about, at all levels in society. Adverts for rooms saying "no dogs, no coloureds" and so on. Many of the immigrants who came over went to live in the areas that were to become centres for ethnic minorities for generations. The crucial social problem of the day was a shortage of housing, which has moderated only slightly since then.

Assault

There were also individual attacks on black people, which generally resulted in "fruitless" police enquiries. One murder however made some impact, that of Kelso Cochrane in Notting Hill Gate in May 1957. It was the subject of considerable publicity and was exploited by both the fascists who were for political action, and the terror groups of the White Defence League and the Ku Klux Klan. Fortunately, such groups have largely gone apart from forays by Column 18.

South Paddington

I moved into the Notting Hill Gate area, to Talbot Road, during vacations from my college a few years after this but there was little activity in the political organisations in anti racism. The others in the rooms were Ian Lennox and Brian Lynham, who always seemed to be ferreting out issues like this. As related earlier it was Brian who introduced me to revolutionary politics and I was active intermittently in South Paddington Labour Party. He became involved in a Posadist group whose politics were rumoured to welcome the Third World war because the first two had ushered in Communist Russia and China. I never followed up this group, Brian came up to my bookshop in Coventry. He had gone to Luton, using the name O'Neil, but had again been victimised. I looked him up on my return to London then he went to Argentina apparently. I located him again in 2009 but he was ill with depression

Reaction

A third feature of the period was the occasional "white" riots, the last of which were in Notting Hill and Nottingham in 1958. Large gangs of white youths went round on what they loudly proclaimed were "nigger hunts". These were vicious events, reminiscent of the lynchings in the USA and made front page headlines in the tabloids. As a result, the West Indian Standing Conference was apparently set up, with a good deal of official help.

Over time

Over the decades, this had been the response of the immigrants to these multiple oppressions - to set up organisations for self defence, integration and the elimination of racism. The West Indians had the League of Coloured Peoples in 1931, run by a worthy doctor, Harold Moody. In Coventry in 1938, the first Indian Workers Association had been established. There was a postman in Leamington Spa, who was a contact of the IS who was involved with this in the early days, Mota Singh. Though the Coventry organisation was set up by, and for, factory workers, the others were generally run by professional people. They were moderate, constitutionalist and conservative with a small 'c'. Paul Foot's books describes the setting up of borough International Friendship Committees in the early 1960's and the good work they did in opposing the cruder propaganda of the racists.

Change

The situation was to change in the UK as the impact of the civil rights movement in the USA arrived. Martin Luther King visited Britain briefly in December 1964 and the impetus resulted in the establishment of CARD. It was from the start a mixture. The old guard of what has been called the race relations industry made up the right wing. This was dominated by Dr David Pitt with his orientation on the Labour Party and a totally constitutional approach.

The opposition were a collection of more radical activists and the increasingly sceptical West Indian Standing Conference. The object of the organisation were simply to end discrimination by laws on equal opportunities. Eventually they were to openly split and separate in 1967. The Indian Workers Association's were suspicious from the start and the main Birmingham association stayed away.

Big picture

The break up of CARD was a seminal event in anti racism, in so far as it symbolised the sharp changes taking place. Most prominent was the success of the Conservatives in Smethwick in the 1964 election. Openly racist slogans and speeches had been used. Subsequent events and opinion polls confirmed the widespread racial feelings. Official Labour Party opinion began to move towards stricter controls, albeit linked to anti discrimination laws. Immigrants were effectively categorised as being part of the problem in a classic "victim blaming" exercise. The National Front was formed in 1967 and was perceived correctly as a much more dangerous organisation than the hotch-potch of existing fascist organisations.

Finally there was the series of racial uprisings in the USA from 1964 to 68. These showed both a reversal of the "white riot" situation and a new power which could be exercised - black power. As in all revolts, the lesson was learnt immediately elsewhere.

More active

From this time, UK anti racist organisations began to take a much more active and aggressive line. Peter Alexander identifies the stages through which the American resistance moved in *Racism, resistance and revolution*. After WW2, the passivity was marked by militancy, revolution and reformism. He says that Martin Luther King was the most prominent figure during the militant years and then we had Malcolm X, DRUM and its successors, Huey Newton and the Black Panthers [and George Jackson I would add]. Jesse Jackson represents the last phase and he does get more timid as time goes by.

In the UK, the situation went from passivity to aggression. Perhaps the clearest manifestation of this was the formation of Rock Against Racism and the ANL in 1977/8 and the rise of black nationalism in the various black organisations. Black chauvinism has remained weak and gets weaker here

- even the riots were multi racial events. The period was also marked by a number of strikes by Asian workers, at Mansfield Hosiery Mills, and Grunwicks especially which showed a good deal of interracial support. On the ground however these large social changes were not perceived. The IS worked with many other left activists and in Islington in particular, CARD went their own way in fighting racism. According to newsletters in my files, the branch had 250 members by 1966 and was participating a range of activities. For the election that year, there was an anti fascist leaflet, distributed around the houses. This was printed by the man the cellar, St Martins Press, who did much of the IS work at that time. One of my newsletters notes that a recent speaker at the CARD meeting on 30 April had been a Mr Tony Cliff speaking on *Imperialism and the Colonial Revolution*. There was a large IS input into the branch which met at Ian MacDonald's house in Hemingford Road. MacDonald was to have a career in the legal world.

Issues

Perhaps the main activity however concerned housing. A landlord, Mrs De Lusigan was exploiting black tenants within the mini empire of her rented houses. CARD began a protest action which involved demonstrating against "Rachman "rents, and taking cases to rent tribunals. Mrs De Lusigan's response was to denounce everyone as "rubbish people". There was a big campaign, lots of demonstrations, and aggro, and eventually Mrs de Lusigan was forced to retreat.

I have national newsletters 1 and 2 in my files and the first one has a three page item on Islington, mainly the anti rents campaign. There was also a leaflet distributed by the Islington Tenants and Residents Association, a genuine body, not like the many racists front organisation that were springing up. CARD got an a lot of publicity over the housing issue and it lead to others, though the long term impact is difficult to determine.

Action Here

The comrades in Tottenham had been active in Islington and in 1966 we set up a Haringey branch. It was to be based in the rented area below South Tottenham overground station. The secretary was Liz Ellingsen who was later to leave both her partner and the organisation. Our first activity was to defend a Nigerian student Tony Osagara who had been harassed by Barrett's the estate agent, acting for the landlord. I think we won that case too and Tony became active for a while.

Local paper

Another facet of our anti racist work at this time was through the letter columns of the local *Tottenham Herald*. It was quite common for local newspapers to print letters that advocated racism. In both Islington and Tottenham, I replied regularly and my copies of these make clear it was largely a propaganda exercise. The foundation of the National Front in

1967 caused much putting of pen to paper. I took issue particularly with the NF line that there were too many "communist inspired" strikes and the correspondence went on for some weeks. It was mainly conflict at a distance and little more. This was not entirely the case and in 1967, I did get threats to my life almost certainly from the NF over the phone. However I worked out that if I intended to kill someone, the last thing I would do is warn them, so I kept on writing.

Bussing

One of the first campaigns in which we took part in April 1969 was against the proposal to bus children to school in different parts of the borough by Haringey Council. We drew up one of those omnibus petitions that have become so familiar since then. The fascists of course were fully in favour. I wrote a leaflet "*Short on Education*" - a pun on the name of the Minister - which outlined the overt racism of the scheme. It advocated a union boycott but this not taken up. The scheme was finally withdrawn.

Demo

There was a big face-to-face demonstration with the fascists at the Civic Centre that was strangely free of physical action. We have always believed that fascists should be physically removed from the streets, a tactic strongly opposed by those who think that free speech and right to demonstrate should be allowed to all, including those who set up concentration camps for dissenting and racial minorities. On this occasion, it was shouting and chanting, as most of the opposition were ill informed parents.

Up a gear

By 1973, the local branch was turning more systematically to anti racism. A national perspectives document came down and I prepared some local ones. It is not clear which came first. My document was a concise practical set of proposals, a model of its kind. We held a local meeting with George Peake, a black activists who had come to prominence in the IS as main speaker, and Mel and I supporting him. This was in the big Morrison Hall but I have no notes so it must have all gone according to plan.

Labour and racialism

The major crisis of racism and fascism came in the late 1970's. These crises are usually strongest when a Labour government does its usual act and accommodates capitalism while squeezing workers. It was a feature at the end of the Wilson period, and re-appeared in much greater strength after Labour adopted monetarism with Callaghan and Healey

Anti Nazi League

The rising levels of racism were most apparent in larger cities, especially London. The IS/SWP set up the Anti Nazi League, ANL, to attack racism. This was done in three ways. First a national committee was established with a number of persons from the political left, unions and such like. The committee was to carry out the main propaganda, through various groupings like *Teachers Against the Nazis*.

Then a campaign was organised to attract young people, mainly through music at gigs and carnivals, *Rock Against Racism* and so on. Personally I found this type of thing boring in the extreme but I went to them where it could not be avoided. Thirdly there was mass organisation whenever the racists showed their heads. This was a systematic physical exclusion - their demonstrations were broken up, individual fascists attacked, stones and bottles were used to good effect. It is true to say that as a result of these tactics the far right took beatings at Lewisham, etc., that they have not recovered from in the last 20 years.

Nature of the organisation

Some people have criticised the ANL for being a popular front rather than a united front. While it is true that the ANL is not a UF of the traditional pattern, there never was any attempt to join politically with other organisations outside the labour movement. Lots of non labour movement individuals did join but on the stated aims of the ANL. The attitude of the labour leaders was strongly hostile, they virtually all believed in free speech for Nazis. The description of the ANL as "red fascists" was to come into use by the union bureaucracy. We had put out leaflets from an early stage saying "National Front = Nazi Front".

Relf

By now I was in Coventry and an example of the harassment of Nazis was our fight against Robert Relf, who had advertised his Leamington house "For Sale , to an English family " early in 1976. "No coloureds " were to apply. This was 29 Cowdray Close. While trying to appear as a "harmless patriotic martyr", he had a long record as a Nazi. The Coventry ANL Newsletter exposed him again in April 1978 : an abusive letter to an invalid threatening to hang him from the nearest lamppost, a call for "All Nigger Lovers to Unite", a letter quoted in Sunday Time of 4 July 76 which ended "p.s. Come Back Hitler All is Forgiven", jailed for throwing bricks through a shop window, a member of the National Socialist Party since 1964, took part in cross burning near Rugby and tried to set up KKK in Leamington, and so on and so on.

There was a permanent campaign against him. His 'For Sale' sign was regularly stolen, and there was a big noisy demonstration against him. It was becoming normal for the police to monitor all such activities, posing as Press. My job on the day of a demo was to continually obstruct and jostle the police photographer. This told them his cover was blown but they would carry on regardless. Eventually there was an national London demonstration on 24 July 77.

Later

Relf tried to emigrate to Rhodesia in May 76, but was refused entry, and then went on "hunger strike" while in jail for racism. Needless to say, he didn't die and was released, unlike 10 dead Irishmen. He joined and left the National Front. I never found out what happened to him.

Overall

The main events of the ANL have been described elsewhere, chiefly in Dave Widgery's book *Beating Time*. [1986, 128pp] There were numerous set piece confrontations, at Lewisham in 1977 which I missed, and a huge carnival in Victoria Park which I think almost everyone went to. My taste in music has always been the more political like *The Kinks* and *Bob Dylan* so I did not follow the various groups which played for *Rock Against Racism*. In Coventry, we had sent coaches down to the Victoria Park event on 30 April 1978. We had run a mini Carnival Against Racism on Hearsall Common on 28 April, and published quite a posh newsletter. We went with the national campaign but the local crisis occurred in 1981. There had been a rising tide of racial attacks throughout the 1970's all over the country but largely in Yorkshire, London. Other areas were involved and now this spread to Coventry.

Double murder

There were two murders of Asians and several attacks, which upset everyone. There were several mass meetings in temples and the Cinematography Club on the Foleshill Road. Our approach had been to set up multi racial self defence squads and we were backed by many Asian youths. However the old guard prevailed and all was left to the police and the elders. There was always some tension in Coventry especially between the Asian generations. Emergency accommodation for women who refuse arranged marriages had been set up and this was one expression of the differing expectations and attitudes. The overall situation did improve but our attempts to build links with Asian was not ultimately successful.

Barricades

There was a short period where an Asian family had received threats. Local activists, plus politicians from one of the weirder grouplets, spent some time sleeping in their front room. This of course was a defensive tactic and unsatisfactory all round. Attempts to form black defence squads, chiefly by Dave Nellist and *Militant* had obvious weaknesses and it was a frustrating time for anti racists.

Defending the ISG shop

In the meantime 1979 had been an another eventful year both nationally and locally. On 9 June a major Nazi event occurred.. Each year in the Midlands, the Orange Order and Nazis had a march through one of the town centres and in 1979, it was in our turn. The route of the march was around the ring way and right past our bookshop in Queen Victoria Road. Although there was a counter march, half a dozen of us gathered, armed with lumps of wood, to await the marchers. I have not very often felt afraid in my life but I was on that day. The bulk of the members had a notion that keeping out of the way was the best tactic so only a few of us were there to defend the bookshop. In the event, the march which was several

hundred strong went past us, and the handful of police, with a chorus of jeers and insults. It was one of their very few victories.

Police murder

Another was the 1979 police murder of Blair Peach, a white SWP member and East London teacher, at an anti NF demonstration on Monday 23 April. There was a police enquiry, whitewash, which came to no very clear conclusion. An independent inquiry found that a six man squad of the SPG Units 1 or 3 had attacked demonstrators. They named the occupants of two SPG vans as the actual murderers . We had a full coach down from Coventry for the funeral, which was an impressive affair. A long march through East London to the Bow cemetery, the *Internationale*, hundreds filing past the grave and so on. Of course , the police have a massive and lengthy history of killing both blacks and demonstrators. These murders occur regularly and no police are ever punished , The police are above the law it seems clear [Blair peach]

A decade on

In 1992 the ANL was revived and the British National Party (BNP), successors to the NF, won the council by election seat in the Isle of Dogs. In the round of council elections that followed, a whole set of fascists were standing. Everyone was mobilised against them, especially against Derek Beacon in the Isle of Dogs. We spent abit of time doing door to door canvassing .

Our local battle ground was the Cheshunt area. We diligently made our way up there and canvassed the whole ward area very intensively. By the end we may have actually over covered the electors who were registering discontent at being knocked up yet again. However the fascists were humiliated in the polls and a series of scandals relating to their armed wing, C18, were exposed on TV.

C.18 were openly pro Hitler and had links with similar groups in Europe. The "front" fascists parties went through the motions of excluding them but this also was shown to be a face saving tactic. The "18" comes from the initials A for Adolph , and H for Hitler , the first and eighth letters of the alphabet. We came across C18 in the East End, and of course they were directly responsible for the series of murders of black and Asian youths in these years.

The fascists held paper sales in Brick Lane and in 1994, following a spate of attacks, it was decided to break up their sale. Large numbers of comrades duly appeared at the top of Brick Lane. On odd occasions the more committed Nazis actually turned up and got the usual police protection. It did little good and they were beaten and kicked into submission. Curiously on the way home we often had to pass a notorious pub where the fascists went for a Sunday lunch time drink and attacks had occurred. Of course we knew about them but they did not know about us,

sitting exposed in our car in the traffic, and it caused a few anxious moments.

Harry

There is one personal note about fascists. When I did my National Service, a person I became very friendly with was Harry Coleman. He had been brought up on one of those huge housing estates in Dagenham and in the absence of anything else, had signed on as a regular in the RAF. As with many other people, he had only realised the reality of the world in his 20's and along with Terry Burton, he had become political. His politics were emphatically for the working class and I left for demob assuming he would stay that way.

A couple of years later however, it must have been after 1967, I bumped into him at a demonstration against the eviction of some squatters in Ilford. To my amazement he told me he had joined the National Front in Luton. I had a long conversation with him but did not make much headway. A few months after that I met him again in Whitehall and again did my best over a cup of coffee to question him. Was he just infiltrating them? Did he really believe their lunatic politics were the way ahead? It seems that left wing groups were largely middle class [he was right about that] and he felt that only workers had any chance of changing the world. His conclusions were then wrongly drawn.

We parted, with me feeling still shell shocked. I never saw him again, though I may have glimpsed him waiting for a coach to go to the Fine Tubes mass picket in Plymouth some years later. I would really like to know what happened to him, he was one of a few people I felt a natural affinity to.

The outburst

Some points finally about the "black riots that have occurred in the 1980's and 90's. These were in Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Brixton and again, Tottenham, with lesser incidents elsewhere. Firstly there were all in response to police killings or attacks on black communities, and all have been characterised by black and white participation. They have all been at least partly successful and very costly to the government. They also followed a well established pattern in that the injuries and deaths sustained were almost entirely by the participants and inflicted by the forces supposed to be bringing back peace, law and order.

George Rude's book *The Crowd in History* has established this as a feature of both UK and France. Rioters in the UK were responsible for 12 deaths between 1736 and 1848, while the "laws" response killed at least 750. The UK "riots" were similarly marked by numerous police deaths from Blair Peach to David Jones. Moreover police murders actually caused riots from Mrs Jarrett in Tottenham to the Douglas's in Brixton. An informative article in *ISJ 2/14* emphasises the multi racial aspect of the UK revolts, unlike the current American ones, and provides a comprehensive political analysis of black nationalism.

Personal

I have never been directly involved in any of the anti police riots. Though I live near the Broadwater Farm and have campaigned for the release of Winston Silcott, I have no personal activity. Winston's brother George is often seen in Tottenham as he lives round the corner. Overt police racism still remains a major problem, despite the efforts of people like Bernie Grant to control it and it is one of the features that has resisted all attempts to date to change it. Meanwhile the age old myth of policing by consent remains as a key part of capitalist ideology.

Other experiences

There are a couple of other personal experiences on anti racism which are worth recording. The fascists stood in a by election in Ladywood, Birmingham one year. Our policy there was mainly to stop them operating as a legitimate political organisation. We spent many hours marching around, engaging in the time honoured role of chasing the Nazis. I don't think we ever caught them despite a hectic attempt to storm a school where they were supposed to be holding a meeting. Some comrades posed as students to get in but the police stopped this. This was after Lewisham where dozens of them had been injured so I don't think many turned up. They got a very low percentage anyway so perhaps the campaign which was a great effort, was worth it in the end.

Shop stewards summer school

The second event was at the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) summer school held at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester. Part of my work as a Trade Union Studies teacher involved doing work of this nature. This event ran for 6 weeks and attracted about 150 shop stewards every week. Every year we would assemble at Cirencester for TU education, T&GWU style but more on this later. At this time there was still a shop steward/union rep input into the School and they were allowed to choose subjects for debate in the evening. Predictably on this occasion various people asked for one on opposing the fascists.

The debate followed the usual lines and one IS/SWP comrade argued for no free speech for fascists. He was heavily out numbered. The teachers were not supposed to speak - a remnant of the rank and file origins of the event - but I asked permission of the Chair, a union rep, then waded in. I think I influenced some shop stewards, though not many of the teachers who attended. We lost the vote by a big majority. However it was not long before the T&GWU and TUC were printing leaflets saying "*The National Front is a Nazi Front*" which had been one of our slogans.

Some years later

There was a demonstration against the racists in Nuneaton at which the departing racists had their coach stoned. Some comrades were arrested I did not take part in this and only briefly saw the events. One comrade John R who had been arrested asked me to give evidence that he was

innocent. I was reluctant to be a witness, not because I have any qualms about providing evidence to oppose police 'version'. My concern was that I simply hadn't been there and this could leave me open to hostile questioning and make his position worse. In the end I had to stand down, but I think the case was dropped anyway, because I heard no more.

Movement of labour

By the 1990's a major element in the fight against racism was the campaign on refugees. The case for free movement of labour demands its equality with capital's parallel freedom. The socialist case is counterposed to immigration controls. The argument in favour of no borders is based on

- the need to establish a proper balance age wise
- the economic basis of the welfare state
- the increasing and ineffective high costs of the immigration service
- the in built racism of controls and its divisive effect
- the maintenance of an undemocratic and unaccountable repressive bureaucracy
- the thin end of the wedge argument who next
- the association of the workers movement with the capitalist movement and ideology

If society were properly organised, there would be enough material resources for all, including the thousands who die daily in Africa. In a post revolutionary world, this application of resources would in time apply to all countries. But in the meantime, controls also encourage police harassment and reverse the assumption of innocence for millions of people. Hence immigration control is a central issue for socialists, as it counterposes revolutionary solutions to reformist nationalism. The Aid issue is now belatedly getting some support but it is obviously not a solution.

Anti imperialism,

It is now time to turn our attention to the second dimension of internationalism, that of supporting workers in other countries and their fight for freedom. In this context we are disregarding the conventional anti war struggles that oppose the military conflict between two advanced countries and looking at revolts by those in small or undeveloped nations. The former type of conflict has not occurred in my adult lifetime so we were concerned with opposition to the large imperialist powers by oppressed peoples, generally without an industrial base and labour movement. We are discussing the incorrectness of supporting national liberation movements without any reservations.

Other dimensions

The simple issue of supporting the victims is not however quite that simple. The ideology of resisting the large powerful countries usually takes the

form of opposing one nationalism by another, and the movements involved are generally dominated by local indigenous capitalists. Hence the relationship of the international workers and socialists movement to the dominant forces in the national liberation is by no means straight forward and have been the subject of much dispute within the movement for several decades. The specific question is how to support the case of the oppressed without aiding capitalism, not being a party to what is merely a change in the form of exploitation.

Political differences

The principle division is between those holding leninist-trotskyist ideas and those with other socialist concepts. We can discount the old Stalinist policies of advocating a two stage process, first a movement to eject imperialism which is replaced by a standard parliamentary type State, and [much] later this is overthrown in favour of socialism. This disastrous idea, which involved sacrificing the workers interests in the immediate crisis, resulted in a series of defeats around the world for several decades from China in 1927 to Iran in 1979.

We are concerned with the debate over the type and degree of support we give to national liberation movements, noting that Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg disagreed over supporting the generally capitalist leaders [Nationalism] We also note that Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution has been an integral part of leninist ideas for many decades.

My position

Essentially then it seems to me that the correct and consistent position should be support for the fight of the workers but not for the organisations that are leading the struggle. Traditional leninist definitions such as "conditional " or "unconditional " and "critical " or "uncritical " support are both wrong and confusing. This latter point is important when the overwhelming majority of workers are extremely suspicious of socialists and regard their changes of line with open contempt. How can we "support" an oppositional party one moment and condemn it the next ? as a government taking repressive action ?. Out of such confusion, comes apathy, suspicion and rejection of socialist politics.

Change of mind

As has been the case frequently in this volume, I must admit that wisdom had come late to myself and that I have been an unthinking supporter of organisations like the Vietcong in Vietnam. I know better now. I believe that the IS/SWP has been loyal to Leninist/Trotskyist ideas and their implications. The paragraphs below need to be read in this framework.

Vietnam

The UK anti Vietnamese war struggle of the 1960's was not one based on refusing to be drafted into the armed forces, which was an element in the USA. The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign was very largely student based and led by various trotskyist groups. The Communists had set up their

own committees based as usual on the Broad or Popular Front, and this meant combining with well meaning liberals, deviant Tories and progressive church people. Their slogan was for *Peace*, our was *Victory to the Viet Cong*. They had it wrong and we got it wrong in the last analysis.

Events

The CP demonstrations were quiet affairs that the government could easily ignore, our were befitting a violent conflict and nobody could ignore 50,000 storming the American Embassy. The dominance of the VSC was one of the first signs of the decline of the CP, as we recognised but they chose to disregard. They even put out a leaflet warning people of our deviance !

Echoes of the war time "conscious agents of Hitler" !!

The really big demonstrations occurred before the police had perfected their techniques of battering down dissidents. We marched but were ready to take action at strategic points. Readers may have seen the tv videos but these do not show the extent of our superiority. People were absolutely furious at the daily scenes of murder shown on the tv screens, and somebody was going to pay. The anger pushed aside the police and surged up to the steps of the Embassy. Personally I got right to the steps and there was no one to stop us getting to the doors themselves.

However there were not enough to storm them so we turned round to get more people. The rumour was that armed marines were just inside so perhaps that was for the best. Demonstrators were being arrested and it was rescuing one of these that I got my eye split open. More police violence. I was with Jim Cronin and Paul Mullen, a doctor. He advised the nerve could be exposed so I went to a hospital to get the wound sown up. I still have my "Grosvenor Square scar" just above my left eye.

Police manufacture of evidence

Another incident of note concerned Chris Hill, a Tottenham comrade. He was large, bearded man, extremely reserved and quiet, from Calne in Wiltshire who worked on the International Telephone Exchange, chiefly on nights. As an active comrade he took part in demonstrations. At one anti Vietnam War demo, somebody pushed over a police motor bike man and had set fire to the spilt petrol. Everyone moved away quickly except Chris who always carried a large very full leather briefcase. He stayed on to watch the fire, briefcase and all, and of course got arrested.

He is a quiet bloke and of a quite nervous disposition. It was inconceivable that he would set fire to a police motor bike. Nonetheless he was convicted and went to Brixton for 3 months. I visited him there, an experience in itself. The prison sentence had a dramatic effect, and he became unemployed and depressed. Prison works it seems . . . Chris, a Leeds University socialist student, who had been our lodger in Seymour Avenue, carried on living in North London but I did not see him again until

the year 2000. He was supporting the campaign for the closure of the Edmonton Waste Incinerator site when I met him on a march. We had a long chat about people and events. He had established a group of mates who were ex labour party and old trotskyists, an interesting group.

Back to the big picture

The eventual victory for the Viet Cong had outstanding consequences for the movement for national liberation throughout the world. There was a build up of the friends of State Capitalism around this time and this was a big addition to that group. At the time we were unaware of the murder of Vietnamese Trotskyists which was subsequently exposed but the success of the various campaigns were a powerful motivators in the events of 1968. The Tet Offensive seemed to set off revolts round the world, and these events have been well catalogued elsewhere .

Africa South

While the political crudeness of the IS/SWP line over the Vietcong had no serious consequences, the South African situation had a dimension of error. I have been on demonstrations from protests about "Sharpeville" in 1960 onwards and have many times stood outside South Africa house in Trafalgar Square, trying to get in. I am unaware of IS/SWP members being active as a group in the Anti Apartheid Movement as such. It was not seen by me as a crucial area of work and it was only in the 1980s that I read Norma Kitson [Sixpence] and discovered the Stalinist nature of the AAM.

For the most part, this is a well written autobiographical work of a SA communist. Her husband Dave was imprisoned for sabotage attacks in the 1960's. She came to Britain and bought up their children. All the usual harassment of the remaining family in SA occurred , including murder and prison. In the UK, the family campaigned very successful on the Anti Apartheid issue, though without much help from the official Movement. They picketed the SA Embassy continuously and aggressively.

Back

On his release, Dave Kitson returned to find himself in the middle of dispute between the family and the AAM leaders. Despite his "hero" status, he was quickly subject to the same treatment as them. His union, the old TASS now MSF, turned against him . Eventually the family were suspended from the London ANC . He explains the actions of AAM leaders like Brian Bunting as seeking total control. We of course would see it as Stalinism.

Perspectives

Revolutionaries in that country were forced into an underground and "terrorist" campaign. It was not primarily a "bomb and blast" tactic as it was mainly property that was destroyed. Military activity was practised outside the country. The movement was dominated by the African National Congress, which means Communists of SA, and they were

strongly rumoured to have killed off any known "trotskyists", though there seems little evidence for this.

Support

The IS/SWP supported the African National Congress "critically". The slogan was " *One solution, revolution*". The line had been that a reformist solution in that country was impossible but this belongs in the "Great Mistaken Revolutionary Slogans" department. We also predicted no reformist answer in post Franco's Spain, and that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) could not win in Northern Ireland because they relied excessively on the armed road tactic and nationalistic politics, rather than the class struggle. All nonsense viewed from here.

Getting it wrong

This strange lapse of political analysis, a current version of the age old predictions that the final crisis of capitalism has arrived - following the lead of Lenin - and that the present government must fall, represents a substantial mistake. It cannot increase the status of revolutionary politics when a reformist solution, long discounted, is put back on the agenda by capitalism while revolutionaries are arguing that only a revolutionary answer will solve the immediate problem.

'Opposition'

As the negotiated settlement became a possibility, the IS/SWP sought to support the "workerist" section in mainstream South African politics. The rationale of this group has been to learn the lesson of the previous national liberation movements in Africa. In numerous countries that have won "independence", the union members have suddenly found that exercising their freedom by going on strike has resulted in military action by the new government and prison for union leaders at all levels.

The workerists saw the dangers of too close an association with liberating governments and wished to maintain an independent labour movement. As even Alex Callinicos points out, Moses Mayekeso, General Secretary of the Metalworkers Union NUMSA, raised the question of the vagueness of the Freedom Charter with the ANC. In particular, he pointed out the lack of reference to working class interests, with no guaranteed right to strike. The ANC responded with promises to correct this. Regardless, the workerist case for strong, independent trade unions, fighting for socialism, remained a powerful, if minority, view in SA.

Covering up the problem

A useful biography of Mayekeso, Comrade Moss, has been published in the UK by the Book branch of the National Union of Journalists. It contains a good deal of information about working conditions in SA - mines, engineering and so on. It does not make explicit his political position and blurs over these for "unity".

Mayekeso was one of the prominent workerists and we did get some of them here on a tour in the March 1989. In Enfield, we booked a pub room

in one of the Industrial areas over the lunch hour and announced a meeting. It was in fact his wife, Kola, that turned up but we only got a handful of workers to the event. However Moses eventually joined the CPSA out of a misplaced sense of unity, I think.

Pretty soon after liberation, we did have a group working in that country, but it appeared to have few workers. There was quite a large split in 1994 but the group survived. Such groups sprang up elsewhere at this time but having a parent organisation in the UK at least allowed some form of support.

A further example of the inflexible attitude to the international struggle came of the Bosnian situation. I was not involved in any political activity over this but I was increasingly outraged by the obsessional dedication to the trotskyist concept of a Balkan Federation, regardless of the actual situation. The argument seemed to be that this was the objective and that prior to its achievement all current arrangements were equally defective, no sides could be taken, no support given.

After Tito

The break up of the old Yugoslavia in the 1990's into its component States had exposed a complex picture. The background facts are clear. Several ex Stalinist leaders used nationalism as a means of diverting an upsurge of working class action, there was ample evidence of the start of a strike wave in post-Tito Yugoslavia, and so on. The subsequent actions of the Serbs seemed to me to be clearly racist, and those of the opposing Croatsians were no better.

Great emphasis was put on the complicity of Croatia but everyone knew this. Croatia was a leading player, had elements of fascism, was backed by the West powers, and just as guilty of war atrocities as the Serbian Army. This was soon after the end of the Cold War, it should be remembered.

It was clear to that the SWP policy was correct so far as the Serbian and Croatian leaders were concerned. But Bosnia, which remained a multi racial element well into the struggle despite an imperfect leadership, was visibly the victim of a nationalist carve up by Serbia and Croatia.

The military invasion, racial massacres, ethnic cleansing, and concentration camps are all the standard signs of oppression.

Argentinean militarists

A similar theoretical failure made its appearance before, with the Falkland War. We were told to support victory for the Argentinean dictatorship in 1982 because they opposed Britain. I could not, and cannot support such a vicious regime. What we were supposed to say to any SWP comrades who managed to survive the executions and disappearances, was never explained.

An automatic support of a regime because this would in some magical way be to the detriment of American or British imperialism is simplistic politics all over again. It is the equivalent to reading out quotes from the Selected

Works of Lenin/Trotsky and using them as spells, Wizardry all over again. Later the leadership came up with the slogan that the chief enemy was at home, from Karl Liebknecht in WW1, which was both more appropriate and instructive.

Our 'friend' Hussein

The same comment could be made when the SWP called for the military victory for Saddam Hussein against the American led UN forces in the Gulf war of 1991. Again I was only marginally active at this time though I was instrumental in setting up an Anti War Committee in Hounslow College. I spoke as a member of staff at a students meeting and we got alot of support.

Support for national liberation in Northern Ireland is dealt with in a subsequent chapter on the 1980's when the IRA Hunger Strikers made a powerful impact. The crisis broke out in the post 68 wave that reverberated round the world. Possibly because of the nature of the armed struggle, and the security involved, it has not been a major issue.

Note on Ireland

Northern Ireland has a number of lessons to teach revolutionaries. After some centuries of repression and war, the most recent outbreak was all sparked off by a student led revolt. Forty years of accumulated repression, since the territorial division, quickly led to mass revolt. The failure of the old Irish Republican Army (IRA) resulted in a new urban organisation, the Provisional IRA, that was to fight back for 25 years. Revolutionary socialists were to have severe reservations about some of the P.IRA tactics like the bombing of the working class on the mainland but at the initial outburst we gave full support in defence of the catholic minority. The "Provisional" title was soon dropped in favour of the simple "IRA".

One of the leaders at first was Bernadette Devlin who was elected to the UK parliament. She did not have too much support over here but she got a lot from socialists in the IS. I still remember her riding around on the back of Jim Nicol's little motor bike as she was ferried about London. The Haringey Trades Union Council set up one of the many meetings she was to address. My first conviction for flyposting, arrested by the SPG, arose from this Bernadette McAliskey, as she became, survived a loyalist attack on her life and appears to have maintained her political beliefs. The failure of the British troops to defeat the IRA, especially after the Hunger Strikes of Bobby Sands and the other martyrs, was a symbol of the power of the working class. 160 years ago the same forces of repression failed to defeat the Luddites, despite massive attempted infiltration. While the student movements like the RAF and Red Brigade were crushed by police and army, some working class organisations, have been able to resist, and ultimately win.

There are political problems as well. The IS/SW has seen the solution in the unity of the Catholic and Protestant working classes, while the IRA

strongly advocates nationalism. There are stories of the IRA deliberately breaking up working class unity by violence. Certainly the bombing of the British working class as in Birmingham has been counter productive. This has obscured the national liberation aspect.

In Conclusion

Summing up then ideas of

- supporting all anti imperialist struggles regardless of the nature of the opponent which could be fascist
- that all NLF actions are to be supported on the basis of the permanent revolution theory which is now discounted
- that the socialist solution is the only answer like predicting the imminent end of capitalism

are clearly suspect

This chapter has looked at internationalism, some aspects of anti racism in Britain , especially the ANL. It has also examined briefly the attitudes towards anti colonial struggles and their limitations .

Chapter Eight Shop Stewards and Union Reps Courses

This chapter looks at teaching union representatives in Birmingham and London colleges and for unions. It goes from 1974 to when I retired and looks at some of the issues and people involved.

When the family had moved to Coventry, after I had completed the MA course, I had started work teaching union reps in what was becoming known as Trade Union Studies, TUS, on day release schemes off work. I did this initially at Solihull College near Birmingham, then part time from 1987 to 1990 in numerous London Colleges and institutions, then at Hounslow College until I retired in 1997. As well as doing college based work, I did various schools for unions at local, regional and national level, and for the Workers Educational Association, WEA.

When I started this type of work, it was to undertake courses for miscellaneous engineering workers who had negotiated time off for union courses at their workplace. The big expansion came when union reps or shop stewards, were given a legal right to time off in 1976, or 1978 in practice. The same facility followed soon after for union health and safety reps, H&S reps. The motive of the Labour government was quite clear. The major political and industrial crisis of the early 1970's had been created by union reps at the workplace exercising their rights and defending their members interests.

Government and bosses strategy

The Donovan Report had specifically spelt out the need to integrate the stewards into the structure of the national unions and the structures of enterprises - prior to crushing them, of course. This meant an integration into the traditional role of unions as the token opposition but ultimate defenders of capitalism against working class introduction of socialism. The move by the Labour Government was understood by union full time officers, FTO's, and the TUC, who had recently taken over the National Council of Labour Colleges, NCLC. This had its origins in the militant students in the early years of the century, Ruskin College and the *Plebs* journal.

History

The WEA's role on the other hand had been as a direct opposition to the NCLC, from 1919 as a less independent system. It had established the WE Trade Union Committee, got assistance from the State via universities and charities. Its founder had been the right wing union leaders like Arthur Pugh of the Iron and Steel makers [Corfield] & [Millar]. The political dispute between the two organisations, Plebs vs. the WEA, raged on for decades.

The NCLC courses, and the books it published, were Marxist in form and language, but very abstract and politically not geared to activity, let alone to building the revolutionary movement. It was just less acceptable than the WEA to those who ran the country. Even so, it was perceived as a threat as many of its lecturers, though by now institutionalised by virtue of being outside a revolutionary party, had revolutionary backgrounds. The TUC took it over and closed it down - it had declined substantially in any case, though the West Midlands organiser Alex Murie still kept going for years.

My perspectives

My own motives were to influence the process of integration which I thought was largely inevitable, given the dominance of the reformist CPGB. Many other teachers were motivated by careerism, chiefly into positions in the union structure. There were a minority of old style CP-ers who may well have had mixed motives in taking up teaching TUS. The problem is that they were not very good at the job, having very crude ideas of what was good education. Derek Robinson and Bill Warman spring to mind, though Derek Robinson was also not very good at his job as a union rep either, unlike Bill Warman. TUS was further characterised by being a vehicle for ex union reps to get into teaching as a career, usually covering management subjects. The T&GWU was notorious for this.

When I first took up the job there was no-one else who was a revolutionary doing it. It was totally dominated by the CP and ex CP, politically identical, and the old TUC right wing bureaucrats. As the Thatcher government began to operate its favoured solution - mass unemployment and threats to union funds to drive the FTO's rightward - the position of teaching TUS became less attractive. More and more comrades got in by default. I always tried to employ them, like Dave Lyddon, Paul Smith of Coventry and Keele University and Terry Segars. Later Andy Pike from Haringey Unison took some of my courses. By 1993 or so, we should really have organised a faction. I did try but there were always logistical, and possibly political, problems, it seemed.

At the start

Meanwhile back in 1974, I had met Jim Sutherland who was already at Solihull College, while teaching for the WEA at the Charterhouse centre in Coventry. Basically I needed money to live while I was studying at Warwick University so I shared a WEA course of stewards from the local Standard Triumph factory with Jim. He took the mornings while I did the afternoons, and he was doing his MA at Warwick as I was.

From here I went on to work at Solihull as assistant to Jim. We came under the department of Mervyn Ishmael, a huge black guy. Mervyn had moved into management but was I'm afraid not that competent. I had a huge row with him over the loss of our lunch hour due to travelling between sessions, and he was super cautious with me after that. I used to meet

him at the T&GWU Summer schools for union reps where we got on well. He was too much a management man for many of the stewards and there were occasional revolts but his heart was in the right place, approximately.

Mervyn was close to the College Principal, John Parkinson. He had established the college 30 years ago as an evening institute, with the help of Jack Jones, then a full time staff union official. John Parkinson was the Chair of the National Co-op Party and a prospective Labour candidate for somewhere or other. He was also the front man in the UK-Romania Friendship Association, and we got visits from the ever friendly but politically evasive Romanians. I am not sure whether he was a classic fellow traveller or passive CP member.

John Parkinson was high up on the Regional Health Authority and a big wheel in Birmingham radio, BRMB. In short he was very well placed in local and labour politics, running his own Industrial Relations Journal. Jack Jones, at this stage the T&GWU General Secretary had been a college governor and John Parkinson retained contacts with the ruling CP network in Midlands trade unions. Mervyn Ishmael had hitched his star to JP. Both were personally quite pleasant, though neither knew what to make of the disintegration of the CP, and the new left like me, that was replacing it. Our relations remained curiously formal, fraternal but distant. The same was true of John Parkinson

Industrial action

This pattern was broken when the union, the Association of Teachers In Technical Institutes or ATTI went on a one day strike on 4 December 1979. Parkinson attended the union meeting and repeated the words of Prime Minister James Callaghan that there was nothing sacred about picket lines and union members should make up their own mind about whether to respect them. I was furious. As it happened the strike went off brilliantly with only a few scabs. We followed the conventional arrangements for strikes - a picket rota, with me as steward for the afternoon period but of course I was there from 8 o'clock. Some people came in the rear of the college which meant coming a mile or so across an open park but we couldn't odds that.

In the aftermath, I took out a complaint against John Parkinson for acting in breach of the union Rules. Of course the bureaucracy "lost" this, as the role of headmasters and principles was a very touchy one in teacher unions. He asserted himself once more in 1982. The college had been employing students to do part time cleaning and this had caused a hassle. He spoke to a local paper condemning "extremists". As the only known extremist in the place, I was in fact not involved - it must have been one of the careerists. It was typical of the managerial attitude Parkinson represented, a consequence of his CP days, I think.

CRE

Mervyn Ishmael remained with JP for many years, a loyal lieutenant. He became a key figure in the Commission for Racial Equality in Birmingham and got a CBE at the end. He became quite ill and followed JP into retirement in the 1990's, their fortunes collapsing with 1989 and the decline of the Labour movement under Thatcher. He died in the 1990's of a liver problem, I was told.

A career

This change of fortunes was markedly not the case with Jim Sutherland. As a reconstructed CP-er, he had a bright future and in 1983 he became the National Education Officer for the National Union of Public Employees, NUPE. When Unison was formed from the amalgamation of NUPE with the Local Government Officers and Health Service Employees, I was not surprised to see him take the top job in trade union education.

Jim was consistent above all things. He retained the Stalinism of earlier years and was probably one of the most authoritarian persons I have ever known. Under him, the TUS unit grew to become the biggest in the country and Jim was always talking to the TUC. He had no great interest in politics and tagged on behind the CP in a way reminiscent on the fellow travellers of the 1930's. He was an effective trade union negotiator and ran the union branch in the college for years, albeit with our help.

The unit

The other teachers in the early days as well as Jim and Mervyn were Fred and Ron. Fred had been a supervisor at Centrax, I think it was, where one of the rare West Country strikes had occurred. I was never sure how he came to be doing TUS. He had very little idea about union education but gave interesting talks on fishing to the stewards. He began to specialise on supervisory training.

Ron Parker was another prolific talker. Somebody added up all the jobs he claimed to have done and concluded he must be 132 years old. He had been a union official in the steel industry, and a journalist of some sort but his alcoholism had ended all that. His son had drowned, and the family, all Catholics, was breaking up. He was persistently drunk until Jim Sutherland negotiated an early retirement package over one summer holiday and he disappeared.

When TUS expanded, Jim was allocated his own section and more staff were taken on. To balance having taken on a dangerous revolutionary, he chose next Terry Hancox, a union rep turned Training Officer at Lucas. Terry had been a toolmaker like Jim, and was very much the pragmatist. He also had an open mind, a strong sense of humour and a tendency to subversion. He soon became a fellow worker, as opposed to a close associate of Jim, who insisted on total control of everything down to stationery. Terry re-married in mid life, which seem to have been a good move. He went off and became the Head of Department at Bilston College. He had links with the CP I think.

Dai Harvard came next, an ex Drama teacher who was fond of dramatic outbursts. He was a capable organiser and had run his own Union research unit in Birmingham. Later he joined various unions as a Researcher and FTO. Finally he became an MP for a Welsh constituency but appeared never to have spoken in that role .

Kevin Whitston arrived from Warwick, a theoretician in the orthodox trotskyst tradition. Kevin had been in the IS but was thrown out for some obscure offence. I never kept up with the fate of the trotskysts who joined after 1968. Kevin had clearly read very widely and was active in the Marxist discussion circle I think the only other permanent member was his brother Colin who followed an academic career at Warwick and Keele Universities. Kevin finished up running some semi state institution I believe, what happened to his 'politics' is unknown.

Kevin came in bubbling with ideas. However he was ambitious and he sided with JS on various issues. I predicted from an early stage that he would finish up as Lord Whitston of Coventry. We did a 21 hour course for unemployed stewards in the early eighties. His students would come to me asking what certain words meant , for example " byzantine" . Kevin used Eric Hobsbawm as his textbook for economic history, a further indictment.

After the collapse of the Eastern bloc in 1989, he admitted a great disappointment I was told and went off to do his PhD on work study. He had considerable intellectual powers, it was just his politics that were wrong. I named him as "The Wizard" because he seemed to believe that all that was required in any situation was to pronounce a "spell" or quote from Lenin or Trotsky. There was no need, it seemed, to actually do anything, just recite the appropriate incantation.

A friendly face

Coming in at the same time as Kevin, Ray Shakeshaft was a lifelong activist rather than an intellectual. He did however have a knack of getting on with people and proved able to keep the section going when Kevin and I left. He had been a Labour Party member, then a CP-er and then back to being a Labour Councillor again. Predictably this waned and Ray took up being the College H&S Officer.

Ray was keen on walking and collected a group of people to go off on expeditions to North Wales. These included Viv Nelson with whom Ray was having some form of relationship. She and her husband had got into free enterprise and making money in a big way. She stood as a Labour candidate in Paddy Ashdown's constituency before giving up politics. The college walking group ran expeditions to Snowdonia during holidays. This was the time of the Red Rope, socialist walking and climbing group, which organised expeditions to North Wales and elsewhere. I became quite keen on this activity.

Ray and Viv , and Maureen and I kept up the habit of collective holidays. For some years we went to Benodet in Brittany for a week in early summer every year, before we drifted apart.

The work

At the beginning, the teaching situation was straight forward, if difficult. The courses were run out of college, on sites all over the West Midlands. Usually we did a half day, so a teacher could have the morning session at say IML in North Birmingham and the afternoon at Cadbury's in the South. This meant no lunch until I protested in vigorous terms and began to start sessions after I had some eats. After the loud row with Mervyn Ishmael mentioned above, things were changed. We began to get whole day sessions. Later most of the work was on site, though I still did courses as far apart as Banks Brewery in Dudley and Rolls Royce in Coventry.

The classroom work in the early days was very basic. The only materials available were from union schools like the T&GWU, and what had been written by Solihull teachers. These were respectively somewhat specialised and crap, so I had to write my own. Very poor levels of support technology - no photocopying or videos - meant limits to teaching effectiveness.

Subsequently the TUC produced course material but this was always politically biased. There was nothing on pay during the years of the Labour Government's *Social Contract*, and later nothing on anti strike legislation during most of the Tory period, so stewards left courses still uninformed if the official programme was kept to. It wasn't and I usually wrote my own course materials over the years and a minority of others have done the same. Health and safety was the latest variation in TUS work. Years beforehand, my CAWU union branch in North London had set up a study circle for Pat Kinnersley's book *The Hazards of Work , and How to fight Them*, [1973, 394pp] which I had helped run while still working in London.

Some training

Later the TUC sent up an expert 'David Gee' to put on a 5 day course for teachers at Redditch College. I managed to get to about 60%, in between teaching duties. Some materials which had been used for FTO training were distributed but they were too complex and had a different approach, so again it was out with the pen. H&S is the subject of the next chapter.

Funding

The mechanism for introducing TUS into the public education system was the grant of £2m from the government to the TUC . This was used to pay the fees of stewards and H&S reps who came on courses, usually 10 days of release in colleges. Some of the money went to individual unions who had their own education colleges which ran courses, usually residential. Short courses either at the discretion of the college or for specific unions were put on, depending on the relations with local FTO's, or their perceived relevance.

The course content

Over the years, I think that many union reps found the courses useful for improving workplace organisation. Two brief examples can be given. I did a Rights At Work course at Solihull for 27 stewards. The course involved a huge amount of workplace reports, or surveys and it was a real struggle. The union reps were very pleased and made a formal presentation at the end. It was a very difficult course to run but everyone benefited.

Secondly, I was doing a Stage Two union reps course at West Thames College in the mid 90's and *The Guardian* published some profit figures for the British Airports Authority. I showed the reps how to calculate the profit per employee figure. They used this to great effect at a meeting later that week. This same course had a good session at the industrial tribunal and found that my condemnation of lawyers acting at IT's was indeed justified.

Money again

For some years, the TUS Centre, TUSC, expanded at Solihull, and extra teachers were taken on, as outlined above. The system of local funding assisted the process. If one borough educated a citizen of another, then it was able to claim "extra district fees" from the latter. There were many times the actual course fees paid by the TUC for each student. Hence we had the curious situation of the ultra right-wing Thatcherite Solihull Council getting millions of pounds from Labour Birmingham Council for providing union education. This could not last and Birmingham built a brand new TUSC at the Hall Green annex in central Birmingham to provide its own courses. Paul Mackney worked here, later to rise to eminence in the national union.

Decline

Added to that, Solihull's main work was in the manufacturing industry and the Tory policy after 1979 of creating mass unemployment by wrecking industry hit the TUSC hard. All of a sudden, the stewards were not coming for courses and we had to diversify. I had set up an evening course for further study some years previously. This had attracted a strange mixture - some FTO's, some full time stewards and some politicals - but it was clearly no complete answer to the problem.

We came up with the 21 hour course for unemployed stewards to help avoid redundancy. Because they ran all the year, these courses were more like conventional education. We certainly got to know the stewards better and we were able to go beyond the practically based training of the day release courses. The stewards or rather ex-stewards, rarely went back to work again in their old jobs. Some went onto higher education, others just used it as education.

Post Sutherland

When Jim left I was put in charge of the small department. John Parkinson tried to get me into educational management but I resisted. Being in education was a price I had to pay to talk to stewards, but I wasn't going to

adopt it as a career. I always dodged meetings and kept everything on a formal level. Eventually he brought in a new Departmental head, John Tomlinson, formerly a TUS teacher from South London, ex MP and soon to be Euro MP for part of the Midlands. He kept pretty much to himself. He "commissioned" or "wrote" a book on the Extreme Left and Right, on which it was rumoured he actually lost money. It was in any case a poorly researched book, mainly taken from the List of contributors to books or journals. Tomlinson finished up in the House of Lords.

Although there was always the danger of TUS tutors dominating their own union branch, I have always been active as a shop stewards and/or H&S representative. I think this has been useful in my classes and also as part of my position as a socialist in the workplace and union. I have usually been active in putting out bulletins for this reason as well.

My work as a union H&S rep is outlined in the next chapter, and my work in Hounslow College in the union and on the National Committee of NATFHE TUS is also in a later chapter. For now I want to recall my brief role as a NATFHE union branch representative on the Birmingham Trades Union Council. Unlike London where the different boroughs have their own organisation, Birmingham has just one huge TU Council for the city. This gigantic organisation could, of course support its own newspaper and full time secretary. Its meetings were very large, up to 100, and these factors resulted in a bureaucratic structure that was almost inevitable controlled by the right wing and the CP, frequently the same thing.

Occupation

I tended to speak only where it seemed relevant, but at one meeting I managed to play a significant part. Fircroft Adult Education College in the south of the city had a number of trade union students and there was a situation where the student and the teachers had strongly opposed the actions of the Principle, an ex T&GWU officer, AJ or Tony Corfield. They had occupied the college and appealed to the BTUC for support. This was through a motion from the ASTMS branch and was a huge embarrassment for the bureaucracy.

There was a brilliant speech by one of the protesters and everything was going fine. Then a T&GWU assistant Chair and Executive member suddenly stood up, and in what was clearly a pre arranged tactic, moved the Previous Question. Many of the readers of this document will, like the union delegates at the meeting, have little knowledge of meeting procedure.

The Previous Question is a devious mechanism, derived like most meeting procedure from parliamentary practice, which if carried on a vote of those present, means that the meeting moves onto the next item on the Agenda. Even if the vote is lost, the meeting must go onto an immediate vote on the issue. It means effectively that either "Next Business" or "Move to a Vote"

is carried. This is a nasty procedural device that I personally, as a Chair, will not accept because it is firstly almost totally unknown and secondly unfair to the item being discussed .

Back at the BTUC meeting there was absolute confusion as they had intended, and the Chair was moving to a vote. I stood up, on a Point of Order, which must be taken, and asked that the meaning of the Previous Question motion be fully explained to the meeting , or I would do so. This floored the Chair and exposed their intention. When the vote was eventually taken it was heavily defeated but instead of moving to the vote as the Lord Citrine's *Manual Of Meeting Procedure* allows, the Chair meekly allowed the discussion to continue. One nil to the rank and file, and we won the motion for full support to the Fircroft students and staff. I knew all that stuff I taught people would come in handy one day.

Alternative Workers Plan for employment

One other initiative deserves mention . Lucas Aerospace workers were frequently in college and I got to know many personally. Faced with redundancy , they came up with an ingenious organisation and Plan. CAITS or Campaign for Alternative Industrial Technological Systems,. This organisation functioned for many years providing both literature and consultancy from its base in my college at Solihull, Coventry, London or Sheffield. It's base was the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine Committee, or LASSCC for short, an example of workplace organisation which went beyond the nuts and bolts of official collective negotiations. This was the rejection of capitalist ideas and their assumption of the unchallenged right to manage workplaces that challenged, in the classic workers council communism tradition, the reformism of the Labour Party and union leaderships. It emerged with the most advanced of the workers alternative plans for production to meet looming unemployment.

At its height, this covered 13,000 workers from 17 workplaces. It had been patiently built from 1969 and the generous support it gave to the Burnley factory in their 3 month strike in 1972 won it strong support from all Aerospace workers.

The Plan

The LASSCC with both manual and white collar inputs had worked for years to produce the Workers Alternative Plan . This was an imaginative scheme, after extensively surveying factories, to counter unemployment with practical projects within existing resources machinery and workers skill. Over 160 items were proposed after suggestions from workers, and these fall into 6 major areas :

- Medical equipment, primarily kidney machines and artificial limbs,
- Alternatives energy technologies including heat pumps and windmills,
- Transport technology most notably the road-rail vehicle and airships,

- ❑ Braking systems such as electro magnetic retarders,
- ❑ Oceanics and submersible vehicles,
- ❑ Remote control equipment, a preferable alternative to robotic operation

It was an embryo of post capitalist employment but rejected by Communist and Labour parties , the union leadership , etc; eventually this was shuffled into obscurity [Wainwright]

More innovation

LASSCC had in the meanwhile formed a combine of combines. In January 1980, 46 shop stewards from 15 major company colleagues met at a pub in Euston to discuss the threatening economic perspectives. They were from, among others, the engineering construction industry, Talbot Cars, British Aerospace, British Leyland, British Shipbuilders, Dunlop, Vickers, and Metal Box. This was the Joint Forum of combine committees and was joined by Rolls Royce, GEC and some others.[Joint Combine] . The SWP line was "would undercut trade unions " by which they meant their left TU contacts, and "we can't control it"

Return to the capital

After some years, I wanted to move back to London again. I had split up with Maureen, both Pete and Dave were working in the capital and I was in a rut. I had never been in any job for more than 2 years before this and I began to apply for jobs. After some notable failures regarding work, I ended up buying a house in Tottenham in 1984 regardless, and commuting up to Birmingham. Eventually I resigned and went back to London anyway in 1986.

Illness

By co-incidence, or not , this was the time I went down with cancer, but after that, in 1987, I began doing part time work in the WEA and London TUSC's. Part time work required great flexibility, you could never be sure what facilities were going to be. Usually you got the worst class room and I had to take literally everything with me . Photocopying arrangements were generally limited, often poor quality. Access to a VCR often involved alot of hassle and feats of physical strength. The other difficulty was that often the classes were one offs, just filling in for somebody. Gradually I began to get whole courses of 10 days, especially at the WEA London region , where Frank C. tried to distribute the available work fairly.

Workers Educational Association

Frank had joined the CP in his 30's, and I suspect it was a career move for him. He had met Paul Smith, a Coventry comrade, while taking a course at Warwick University and was fully aware of the nature of the CP. He was now in charge of the WEA TUS for London. It was a difficult job, the part timers were a curious mixture of retirees, odd balls and people on the make, doing this until their job in the union bureaucracy turned up. Frank

later went onto work at the University in Luton, when TUS started to fall apart in the 1990's.

Over the 3 years I got to know the tutor in charge, Frank, quite well. I joined the MSF union where Frank was active and helped to run the branch. As stated previously, I did the branch newsletter and became delegate to the Haringey Trades Union Council once again. Most of the other tutors were either career women or miscellaneous politicians. I also did part time work in a number of colleges and it was quite a pleasant time overall. It was a geographical branch, covering voluntary sector workplaces in the WC1 district.

I did all sorts of courses and also worked at the outreach section at Charlton House in Woolwich. I remember one course on the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations. A very large number of civil servants had enrolled and it turned out they were supervisors who had got no training from their management. The course went well but one woman complained to the TUC. She said that I was competent enough but appeared to have a bias towards unions - there's no pleasing some people!

Back to full time work

All this time I had been trying to get a full time job and eventually I succeeded. I had worked all over London but became a Senior Lecturer at Hounslow College. I was taken on with Mick Carter who I had worked with at the WEA, though Mick never got on with Frank. The two existing staff were Graham R and Bill M. When a redundancy situation loomed up after 10 months, these two were only too pleased to accept it. Graham because he was to be the only one teacher remaining and Bill because he envisaged a big cash sum and lots of part time work - he was a great drinker. Predictably, both were Stalinists.

Mick and I fought the plans. We went to the TUC and I prepared a massive document saying why we had been taken on and why there was still work available. Slough College TUSC had been closed down recently and that enlarged our catchment area to Aylesbury, Newbury and Basingstoke - a huge potential. We had meetings with the Governors and got the redundancies put off, then cancelled.

Meanwhile the other two had gone off - the one struck down with a heart attack and nervous breakdown, the other clutching his voluntary redundancy money [VR]. It was part of his teaching spiel to go on at length about resisting VR but he went for it within minutes of it being offered by the Principle. Curiously, an SWP comrade who was close friends with the two redundancees, Jim S, sided with them and against us. He was taking a teaching practice as part of a certificate course at the college but was at times somewhat erratic in performance, an alcohol related problem.

Soton

He later moved to Southampton and died of cirrhosis of the liver. He had been one of the few comrades to be expelled twice from the SWP but had remained friends with many in the SWP leadership. His expulsion was over personal behaviour. Nonetheless his obituary in *Socialist Worker* by Roger C was in glowing terms - a standard piece of orthodox, some would say Stalinist, journalism. I regarded it as one sign of the degeneration of the politics of the SWP.

Expansion

Because the two Stalinists who were in charge had left suddenly and we had to fight off redundancy, we were at first under some pressure. In this situation, we had nothing to lose and constructed a system of work as we went along. We were soon in a strong position, not just because we had inflicted a rare defeat on the college Principle and the middle managers were incompetent. The system of funding was changed and our courses became unexpectedly good payers. The government were anxious to integrate union courses fully into the new funding system and this was very favourable to TUS. Our main part time tutors were Pat or Paddy Ryan and Sid Whatshisname.

Both Mick and I were getting a reputation as being difficult customers to deal with and our position as branch officers was a plus as well. At the TUC, a new Regional Education Officer had been appointed and internal redundancies meant that a sideways transfer was involved. The new REO knew very little about education, having been in the International department. He was forced to lean on the experienced and long serving TUS tutors, and this meant we had a largely free hand. We were by far the most effective and flexible tutors anyway. The new TUC Head of Education was Alan G who had been a shop steward with Mick Carter, or so he said. Although Mick affected a total disillusionment with him and broke off public relations, I always found him approachable and friendly, with a most unTUC-like sense of humour.

One of the leading figures on the Regional Educational Advisory was Martin S, the Education Officer for NALGO and then UNISON. He seemed to me to be one of the very few genuine people in the full time bureaucracy, and Carol S of the GMB union was another. Most of the FTO's were just time servers, or people looking for promotion but Martin and Carol, for whatever reason, actually tried to do a reasonable job in training union reps. So the situation regarding the TUC, and a few of the FTO's was favourable by the mid 1990's. The fact that Mick and I were on the national TUS Sections committee (for the South East and East Anglia) gave us some more status - though in fact we were the only ones willing to take on the job!

So our work at Hounslow did pick up. For a couple of years things went well. The long term decline due to the cancellation of government funding and the apprehension in the workplaces began to have its effect by the mid 1990's. The TUC opted for moving TUS into formal systems of

Accreditation - it aided their central control they said - and the levels of union education in London dipped still further

The other one

Mick Carter who was my fellow teacher at Hounslow was a bit of a mixture. At one level, he affected a personal aggression towards college managers and college union officers, and spoke strongly of union commitments. He was nonetheless not keen about doing the detailed work involved in actually doing something about these items. He liked doing teaching and would go miles to take a class [or was the travel money?] but showed no initiative in union matters generally. He was a quite committed teacher in the classroom and went on to work for the MSF at their college at Whitehall.

In later years he became a full time convenor in Barnet Council and I met him regularly, sometimes on picket lines. He spoke at our Radical History Network meeting on the Grunwicks anniversary. Then a nasty shock- his new partner Chris rang from Birmingham to say that Mick - who was an exercise freak, cycling everywhere - had dropped down dead a week previously. He was in his mid sixties and a good comrade.

Other work

Outside college courses, I often did work for unions at various levels and perhaps the contrasts between two examples could be instructive, the T&GWU National Summer schools and the East Anglian Region of the Fire Brigades Union. For about 15 years, I spent one week every summer taking a class for the T&GWU Education Department at the Cirencester Royal Agricultural College. The summer schools had started out as an expression of the rank and file activists, chiefly in the docks, from the 1950's. It was well attended and the event was an interesting combination of members activity and a supporting structure of union staff. I have written elsewhere of the debate on racism at Cirencester.

However by the 1980's the drive to impose national union ideology began to be felt. There were more and more union officials as teachers, the free time debates were reduced then cut out. Frank Cosgrove, who was mentioned earlier, was now in charge and began to insist more and more on the T&G line. Yet during my first year there, one of the lecturers had spoken in a "main" session and put a line that contradicted union policy. Not only would that be impossible later on but we were reminded that we had to keep to the printed course material, no deviations allowed. People began to be excluded, Mick Carter because he fell out with the bureaucracy, and so on, though he dated other teachers.

There was usually a drink up for the teachers at the local Wadsworth pub on the first day and the night before the week ended. With the move from Cirencester to the National Union of Teachers centre at Stoke Rochford, this slowly fell into disuse. I kept going because it remained a chance to meet teachers from around the country. I remember in 1983 that I spent a

lot of time with John McLoughlin, the famous stewards "bell ringer" from Fords who got the workers out in his own special way. It was always nice to see Wolf Wayne from Slough College and Muswell Hill, despite political differences.

I did get work there for some SWP comrades but they were not asked back.. The T&G got some funds for taking on new teachers it seemed for the first year but not subsequently. The whole thing became more and more of a token as the union drifted right wards, along with Frank Cosgrove. I was finally excluded on the spurious grounds that I had merged my class in with that of another tutor and hence broken from the official timetable. In reality they were just getting rid of the dissidents, then the non T&GWU staff, prior to closure. The union had set up its own centre in an Eastbourne hotel which became a regular union venue.

Firefighters

The East Anglian Region FBU was in sharp contrast. Terry from the original Tottenham IS had become the EC member and he always insisted on a full training programme. His region was one of the few that used up their budget. Over the years I did a good deal of work in day schools and so on. There was also the well attended and successful evening course that resulted in a whole number of new activists coming into the branches. A repeat performance was tried in 1995. This time covering the political aspects of unions but this did not take place as planned. Andy Gilchrist who was to go onto being the general secretary of the FBU attended the EAR courses.

This work was an excellent example of the use of union education to promote organisation for all members but most union education serves to identify and encourage potential FTO's - and spend the members money on that .

Afterwards

Union reps on the college courses would often contact me afterwards with some problem. In 1995, several Asian workers had been disciplined and dismissed for drinking in cars in a car park in their own time, and in spite of not being in breach of the Rules or procedure. The senior steward asked my advice, which I gave but they ignored it at the hearing. I re-advised them and this time they got a redundancy offer which they basically wanted. The AEEU FTO who had handled the case had clearly been co-operating with management, as he usually was. I became such an expert in this area that I concluded I could get work doing these industrial tribunal jobs !

Trades Union Congress

My relations with the TUC were formal but not friendly. Because I was not seeking advancement, I think I came to be regarded as an eccentric. After all many of the tutors were nominally Communist but actually non political or right wing, so perhaps I was regarded as fitting into this brand of

hypocrisy ! Some chance. In any case, I was still around after the bright stars had been promoted upwards.

In the Midlands, I was on the panel of West Midlands Tutors along with Paul Mackney who was to become general secretary of the lecturers union, and did take courses and briefing for the Regional Education Officer, Pat Hughes. In London, I sat on the Regional Education Committee and found this a useful place to meet union officers who were not entirely bureaucratised.

Conclusions

At the end of the day, my work for union education within the college system had a number of benefits. Primarily there was the element of informing union stewards about various aspects of organisation, good practice, the truth about current disputes, ways round the legal restrictions, and the validity of rank and file work. Secondly, the nature of the union bureaucracy and the role of the FTO's was always coming up and I felt my explanation was helpful to many stewards.

Thirdly while political discussion was explicitly ruled out by the funding arrangements, the TUC and College authorities, there is no way that it can be ruled out of the course. Initially there were plenty of defenders of the Labour Party but by the 1990's, it was difficult to find someone who would speak for it.

Finally the argument for revolutionary politics was made to a small number of stewards. I would often quote *Socialist Worker*, where appropriate, and usually read it demonstrably over my lunch time sandwiches. I frequently managed to provide work for comrades, increasingly as TUS became less fashionable as Tory changes began to bite. I have tried to avoid being a mere recruiter for "trade unions" and the response from the union officials would suggest I have done just that.

By the time I retired, I think I was the longest serving TUS teacher and perhaps one of the best.

Teaching trade union studies has taken a big chunk out of my working life. The political structure made this work quite difficult in the beginning but as the situation got generally worse, opportunities arose for a greater revolutionary input. More comrades were able to get in. I was not dragged in union politics as the "line" of the SWP had suggested I would be.

Chapter Nine "Fight for the Living", health and safety at work

This chapter looks at health and safety at work, particularly as part of my specialised area of TUS but also as a workplace issue. The "Hazards movement" and my own role as a union H&S rep are looked at. The time scale is necessarily wide but is mainly from 1976 onwards.

Occupational H&S was put on to map for me personally when I read Pat Kinnersley's influential book "*Hazards of Work and How to Fight Them*". This was the opening title in Pluto Press's series of "*Workers Handbooks*", and has been called the union H&S reps 'Bible'. At the time I was still in the CAWU, though I was taking the Diploma in Industrial Relations Course at Enfield Poly, later Middlesex University. The North London branch decided to set up a study group. I was deputed to organise it, at my house, and to prepare the introduction. In the event, not a lot of people attended consistently, only the branch Chair, Eddie Hayes and myself, though I certainly found it illuminating.

The essential thing about *Hazards at Work* was that it changed the emphasis. Every one had thought up to then about the accidents side of H&S, the question of blame and getting compensation. Accidents are a favourite topic for employers because they can often shift the blame onto a "careless" worker. This fits in neatly with the Tory policy of blaming the victim which is central to their social policy.

Damning evidence

This is the "myth of the careless worker", and Kinnersley tackles it in the usual robust style. This phrase appears to have originated in the book and has been widely borrowed since. He collects a lot of evidence to show that the reality is the carelessness of the employers. Workplaces are designed with no thought for H&S, layout is made to maximise production, management responsibilities are consistently dodged (including reporting accidents), tools and machines are outdated and worn out, occupational training is virtually unknown, substances are used with no planning, and unhealthy workplace practices like shift work constantly being imposed. Unhealthy and unsafe systems are built into practically every workplace. Far from being careless, most workers perform miracles to avoid accidents and ill-health and employers exploit the very small number of examples of "carelessness" for maximum effect.

Health more important

Kinnersley repeated said that health was now more important than traditional concerns. Accidents were the most "obvious" problem when most industrial processes were mechanical. However since the War, more and more technology has been used, starting in the USA. Technology applied to workplaces usually means adverse health conditions

for workers and the common sense rules about accidents are less relevant for occupational ill health. The offending factors are built into the process - use of chemicals, repetitive sprain injury, hazards of stress at work - and workers cannot so easily be blamed, though they do their best. This is also the reason why virtually all employers documents ignore health, dealing exclusively with safety, despite European laws requiring a wider consideration.

Preventative

Hence preventative actions against ill health were now the urgent priority because this caused many more deaths than accidents. Kinnersley was the first British writer to study the American scene, where this development occurred earlier, and concentrate on health hazards. A pioneering book had revealed this. There was evidence that workers were now more aware of the effects of technology on health. There is also some evidence that workplace conditions were the cause of one third of all ill health, a startling statistic that ought to have been ringing alarm bells in the labour movement, if not the medical profession.

Consequences

Union reps were becoming more aware of the epidemic of ill health from which, unlike accidents, there is no general automatic medical recovery. A broken leg mends quickly, but in contrast, damaged lungs, heart, central nervous system, etc, either improve gradually, or more likely, just get worse. Apart from the severe consequences for the workers affected, there are two general political consequences of this - the strain on the health service is considerably increased, a subject covered by Lesley Doyal an analysis in the marxist tradition. Secondly, the amount claimed in social security benefits went up substantially as Governments have found to their dismay from the 1980's onwards. Occupational H&S played a part in this.

Occupational death

Hazards at Work opens with a story about a man exposed to Toluene Diisocyanate, or TDI. It is a classic case of management failure at several levels. This incident has become a favourite case study on H&S courses because it is so typical, *David and the Foam*. This leads onto the standard analysis of premature death - *The Class Way of Death*. People who die are classified into occupations, in much the same way as the official class system is constructed, for statistical purposes.

A ratio of deaths per thousand of each occupational group is worked out and averaged. This average is 100. Comparisons can then be made to each occupation. Overwhelmingly, manual workers have readings of 140 or so - miners being 180, kitchen hands 130 and so on. The professional occupations reads "judges 75, clergymen 62" and so on. As Pat Kinnersley points out, non - work situations also affect the figures. In fact analysis by social class, based on occupation, reveal exactly the same

result. For 78 recognised causes of death, the rate for the bottom two classes is higher in 73 of them.

Disasters

All this is not to say that accidents don't matter anymore. The totally uncaring attitude of employers is bound to have horrific and immediate consequences for unfortunate employees. A series of spectacular disasters occurred in the late 1980's for which employers could not shift the blame. Many were all the more publicised because members of the public were involved - Kings Cross fire, the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, and the Clapham train crash.

Union organisation

The *Hazards at Work* book made a powerful impact in 1973. Pat Kinnersley went on an extended lecture tour in that and subsequent years. He covered many shop stewards committees, union branches and places where union courses were being held. It was in fact a British version of American book *Work is dangerous to your health* by Jeanne M Stellmen. The UK version was widely promoted by Union Rank and File groups, the National Rank and File Organising Committee, the communist Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions and most left political groups. In subsequent years, many union reps and political activists have found it invaluable despite being out of date in legal and technical matters.

TUC copy

The TUC was not impressed. The Social Insurance Dept deleted references to the book from training materials produced by its own Training College. In the 1980's, the TUC attempted to produce a similar all round guide to H&S and entitled "*Hazards At Work*". This is a travesty of the original. It is written for management and academic circles, with few union references and a minimum of practical advice for trade unionists. The information is often out of date, the figures relating to occupational disease are inaccurate and un-sourced and there are many omissions. It had borrowed freely and without acknowledgement from the Pluto Press book. Pat Kinnersley noticed that one section had been plagiarised straight from his book. This was especially glaring because one of the paragraphs copied had a printing error and even this had been reproduced - that extraordinary item of personal protection, the ovi nasal respirator! I wrote a critical article, *A Socialist Guide to 'Hazards at Work'*, which exposed these faults.

Of course, the *Hazards at Work* book itself can be criticised from a socialist viewpoint. Perhaps most serious criticism can be levelled is the way Kinnersley deals with the Factory inspectors or HSI. As he says, many workers write them off as management stooges but he goes on to say that many do have good intentions. They do respond to union pressure.

Government Inspectors

Though it is not mentioned, the HSI claimed that 95 % of individual complaints were dealt with in seven days, mainly by a visit. This contrasts to the extremely low follow up to reported accidents and the infrequent standard visits of Inspectors. All this is positive as are the good intentions of some of the Inspectors, especially the younger ones.

Their union - the Institute of Professional and Managerial Staffs - produced useful information, such as an Alternative Official Health and Safety Report. However they are part of the State, and as such their role objectively is to promote the interests of the capitalist class. The H&S Inspectorate does perform these tasks in the last analysis. Some clarification regarding the role of the State ought to be one of the lessons learnt by workers in conflict with their employers. Kinnersley does not provide this.

A second point concerns the attitude to the official union leadership. It is rather soft on the TUC, with not a word of criticism of its medical Adviser, Dr. Robert Murray, who was to be the subject of repeated complaints later on. This of course, could not be foreseen but the role of the TUC is not difficult for anyone with a minimum of political experience to identify. The book also gives the somewhat false impression that the TUC Centenary Institute is an efficient body dealing promptly with workers complaints. It was in fact moribund and bureaucratic, and does practically nothing. The TUC and union leadership is described as "flabby". While the "identity of interests" argument is correctly attacked, there is no serious definition of the role of union leadership or their performance in practice. Again this ought to be one of the results of a committed approach to the subject.

Workplace organisation

On the workplace organisation section - the book is quite strong on the technical points about safety committees and such, but weak on the relationship to union organisation and the membership. Reporting back, providing information bulletins and membership education are key aspects of this.

Political analysis

Finally there was no serious political analysis. What politics there are can only be described as diffuse, spread out through the book. It was implied more than stated. Presumably the volume is intended to be agitational rather than propagandist, even so a chance to bring out the highly political nature of H&S at work was missed. Apart from the Doyal book mentioned above, Daniel Berman provides much of the theoretical underpinning of this element. Useful background about the bigger picture are also in summaries of the government *Black Report* by Peter Townsend, etc, and an American volume *The Politics of Cancer* by Samuel S Epstein. Having said all of that, for many years, I still went round second hand bookshops buying up copies of *Hazards at Work* at £1 or so, to use on courses. The

book has never been up dated though the intention is there, until then the old one remains in use.

TUC input

My first formal contact with H&S came in 1975. When I was teaching TUS at Solihull College, I attended most of a 5 day tutor training course at Redditch College run by 'David Gee' ?. He was at the time the TUC person but I had met him, through a CP union rep, while I was working briefly at the Agricultural Workers Union between times. So I was launched on a career as a H&S specialist in TUS.

Health and Safety courses

The standard H&S course was the ten day release, which was run every term. There was a Stage Two follow-up and from 1995 a Stage Three. One difficulty was that all the courses looked at the functions of a union representative in terms of the role of the union, rather than workplace officer , and also as defined in the Regulations and also other pieces of legislation. The other main component was the actual hazards of work to health. Accidents are looked at early, then onto chemical and dust exposure, stress, repetitive strain injury and such like. In addition, we would do special subject courses on specific hazards and general introductory courses for unions at the college or on site. The ten day courses were our main projects. It was very encouraging to contrast the reps as they come in and when they finish. They were often as amazed as I was.

Usefulness

Without boring readers , I can give two examples where union H&S reps got information from my courses that directly affected their workplaces . This happens to virtually every rep on all courses so I am being selective, one from the early days and one from the mid 1990's. There were some reps from Lucas Aerospace on one of my courses at Solihull. It was the practice in their workshop to machine an alloy of mainly copper and beryllium with no protection for the operator. I got in touch with the Hazards people who got information from Malcolm P of Leeds University. Beryllium is an extremely dangerous substance - the safety standard is one tenth of a millionth part - and can cause lung damage. At Leeds, it was worked in a totally sealed environment.

The reps heard about this and production stopped from the next day. It was re-introduced later under very tight conditions and X rays were given to affected employees. The ideal solution would have been to find another metal rather than increased protective measures but these were aircraft parts.

The second example concerns a Probation Officer in West London. She was working right next to a photocopier and several of her colleagues had laser printers on desks. She knew nothing about ozone coming from these but quickly acted to correct the situation. The photocopier had never been

serviced, it turned out. Later in the course, we re-structured her interviewing time-tables in an exercise on preventing violence at work.

At first

My first involvement with H&S had come from an earlier period, through the investigations of one the LSE students who moved into the Tottenham IS in 1967. Laurie Flynn came from a family of union activists, and his father was the General Secretary of a Scottish printers union. He was a very serious and honest comrade who was to become a journalist for some years on the *Socialist Worker*. One of his main claims to fame at this stage, however, was over asbestos. Working for a building magazine, he had discovered that there had been a massive cover up over the fatal effects of exposure to the deadly dust.

The horrifying facts were that the epidemics of death had been noted by doctors in the last century. A government inquiry of 1906 had spelt out the danger of lung disease, cancer and a special cancer caused only by asbestos, mesothelioma. Predictably, successive Tory, Liberal and Labour governments had passed only weak legislation, which had been even more weakly enforced by the employer friendly State agency, the Factory Inspectorate. These are now known as Health and Safety Inspectors [HSI]. Use of asbestos had grown and leapt forward during and since WW2.

Deaths from exposure

As a consequence, people were starting to die in large numbers. The Inspectors did virtually nothing and were severely criticised in subsequent court cases. The union leadership also did nothing and indeed the TUC was accused of helping the cover up. A court case followed this specific issue which the TUC won on a technicality against *Hazards at Work* rank and file magazine as it was then. See below for details.

Laurie Flynn and rank and file action

The whole asbestos scandal broke when rank and file union members began to link the deaths of workers to the exposure to asbestos. Lagers in Glasgow and dockers in London were prominent in this. Laurie wrote a booklet on *Asbestos* based on his research for the *Construction News*. He played a major part in getting the whole process going. As an IS member he was active in the Tottenham branch activity writing some frank articles on local disputes. He subsequently left the party, joined the *World in Action* team and was seen on TV on some Monday evenings. His attitude to the SWP has been described as hostile - several people spoke to him at an anti teacher redundancy demonstration in Enfield in 1993 but he was not very friendly it seems. I had a chance meeting in 1996 and we spoke happily for half an hour, with him agreeing I was right in the '68 debate on structure.

Back to the narrative - in the 1960s, much of the significance of the asbestos scandal passed us by. We did mention it in workplace bulletins, and when a factory Inspector spoke to the HTUC, some informed questions

were asked. Subsequently it has figured prominently on my union H&S reps courses. There have been an increasing number of television videos which can be used in this context. However the next big step was soon to follow in the early 1970's.

Evasion by employers

Pretty soon the news spread. The employers set up a front organisation, the Asbestos Information Council which did its best to spread lies that only blue asbestos was dangerous, white and brown were OK. Court cases followed. The mention of asbestos became enough to give HSI's the nervous twitches, and union H&S reps were to become acutely aware of employer's irresponsibility over hazardous substances. They correctly drew conclusions that asbestos was not an exception. The general approach and the ineffectiveness of Inspectors was clear for all to see. Meanwhile thousands died every year at this time and the toll has risen annually.

Consequences

By the 1990's the crisis had assumed huge proportions. The stability of Lloyds of London Insurance was threatened by the claims from the USA about asbestos cases and the huge costs of removal. Asbestos is the best case illustrating the irresponsibility of employers with regard to worker's health. It is now being realised that occupational ill health makes up one third of the overall total - all preventable if work were rationally organised and the money motive removed from private and public sector. Don't tell me - you need a revolution for that !

Source book

An important element had come in Alan Dalton's book, *Asbestos - Killer Dust*, which tells much of the early events. This is perhaps the best known of his books that include one on oil hazards. The practice of publication seem to come naturally to the Hazards at Work movement, and many books were published, unlike the official unions, who generally produced only minimal union handbook or guides.

Participants

A useful digression at this point might be to consider the role of the various players in the H&S game. We look at the State, the Communist Party and union based groups. Firstly the State - the government agency with responsibility for H&S is the H&S Inspectorate, previously best known as the Factory Inspectors. We have looked already at this and some duplication is unavoidable. Its pioneering role in exposing and trying to prevent the worst excesses of early capitalism has been described with some approval by Karl Marx in the first volume of *Capital*. Subsequently it has maintained a distinctive position that a healthy and safe workplace is an efficient one, and that investment in H&S is a profitable exercise.

Though this is in line with some of the biggest companies in the UK, and the thinking of the European Community, it has been in sharp distinction to the attitude of most UK governments, and indeed the majority of employers.

Here, money rules, and costs are the supreme arbitrator. Only strong union pressure, especially in state owned industries established better H&S standards in the 1960s and 1970s. In the last analysis, the HSI's have to follow the government line, despite their knowledge of the deficiencies. Of course individual Inspectors have been known to take up items which are important to H&S reps and to attract the employers strong disapproval. The objective role however is to legitimise the government and its "policy". It is no longer a question the management exercising naked power, now they are "keeping to the law", or code of practice more likely .

The law

The H&S AW Act was the main law and it had substantially replaced the old Factories Act and other specific laws. Most of the new clauses are modified by the term "so far as is reasonably practical". These words were not prominent under the old laws. They can be used as a get out clause by employers and have been the subject of much complaint by union H&S reps. Legal enforcement did receive a large boost in 1993 with the introduction of the six European Regulations, passed despite the frenzied opposition of the Major government. Though weaker than the original Directives, they caused mini crisis in many work places. The Euro Regs if applied thoroughly in practice, could partly control employers, as well as extending workers rights

Secondly, Communists

The CP appeared to have had a notion that involvement in H&S was the way to politicise their network of stewards who were chiefly union militants over pay and related issues. Perhaps they correctly worked out that the post war boom could not last for ever. Some decades ago, the CP had abandoned its role as a revolutionary party to become sort of progressive wing of the Union movement, with manipulated rank and file, and 'broad left' sub groups.

To this end, it drew an ideological line around the unions, saying that they were the true guardians of working class interests, unlike the Labour Party. It had, of course, characterised the LP as being 'social fascists' and 'the class saviours', at different times in the past. Now they had their stewards movement and a toehold in the bureaucracy, it was time to educate union members through the political lessons of H&S. As well as this generous interpretation of their motives, there is another that centres on the its use to infiltrate management, both ideologically and in practice.

Infiltration

So far as the infiltration into management is concerned, the CP had many of its members in important positions in workplaces. It had never been averse to sending people into the opposition's camp. With the growing awareness of the importance of H&S, it encouraged members to take up management positions in H&S. Even more, when management began to

use H&S Committees as a testing ground for worker participation schemes, as it did in British Leyland, the CP was only too keen to go along with this. The CP involvement with worker participation has been told elsewhere in Dave Lyddon's article and H&S was certainly an element in this.

Hence for the CP, H&S was an issue in which their particular type of militant reformist could be pursued, and which suited the widespread group of their members and supporters. In some respects it rose as workplace political organisation declined. Considerable attention and resources were therefore to be devoted to it - and I was one of their foot soldiers in this respect.

Union based groups

Thirdly, the union and 'left' response, which can be divided into three parts: the national union structures, the rank and file representatives, and organisations that support union members. The national structures, under membership pressure, did belatedly begin to provide publications to inform members, usually Handbooks, especially the Transport and General (T&GWU), the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, (AEEU), Manufacturing Science and Finance, (MSF), and the General and Municipal, (GMBATU). The latter also produced Bulletins and a publication on *Tenosynovitus* which is surprisingly good. The TUC which has no membership pressure, continues to churn out poor quality publications and teaching material for union courses.

Compo

One activity that is carried out by national structures is the legal action for compensation for employer's negligence causing accidents or ill health. This is the process of getting money once the blood is on the floor and is essentially a defensive process. It is one that union members appreciate and could be a deterrent if applied with vigour. Union solicitors normally only take on strong cases, however, and there is a growing body of more adventurous lawyers, especially over ill health, that will deal with less certain cases.

Beyond the law

It is often forgotten that compensation can also act as a powerful deterrent as well as having its passive role. Asbestos and hearing loss compensations have proved major problems and the prospect of hundreds of stress at work cases must be a nasty prospect for employers. Many well organised union reps did monitor workplace H&S and this appears to have a positive effect, as I explained on my union courses. In summary it must be concluded that the union leadership in practice plays at best a bureaucratic role in workplace H&S. It sees the issue as an opportunity for compromise and participation, with a heavy emphasis on the legal side. No change here then.

One example of representative action

So far as the second component is concerned, this centres on the role of the union rep which can perhaps be covered initially by my own actions as a NATFHE H&S rep in Solihull and Hounslow Colleges. When we had become established at Solihull, the TUS section took over the NATFHE branch. At first the branch had the Principle, Vice Principle and Senior Head of Department as the officers and this was clearly unsatisfactory. Even so, it gradually became apparent to me that we, as practising teachers, were equally unsatisfactory because we were substituting ourselves for the members. I resigned and stayed on only as H&S rep.

A Committee

I managed to negotiate an effective Constitution for a H&S Committee - I was still using it as a model twenty years later. We were able to use the Committee as a sort of Joint union committee, or JSSC, and improve organisation in the weaker unions. There was one long running problem that illustrates this. We wanted to formally inspect the kitchen area but the Principle, perhaps to show he 'knew' the law, objected because it was not the "workplace" of any lecturer. This dragged on for months - while we said that it was a joint union inspection as allowed in the Regulations and that therefore we were entitled to go ahead. He gave in eventually and we did a thorough job. This had a lasting effect on the supervisor who resented this "outside" intervention - a typical response.

At Hounslow, later West Thames, College, Mick Carter and I did an almost repeat job. We also substantially improved H&S for lecturers. One example can be given. Asbestos in workplaces, if it cannot be immediately removed by licensed contractors, should be mapped, inspected, marked up and all the information properly recorded. It must also be sealed in by paint or some other covering. Employees must be told of the dangers. At WTC, an old asbestos bench, which the technicians refused to remove, was mysteriously taken away over a week end, probably by "cowboy" contractors.

We raised the issue, only to find that the asbestos map had "disappeared". Embarrassing documents were always disappearing at WTC, as at many workplaces. The newly appointed H&S Officer promised to tackle this but said he could find no trace of a HSI recommended procedure for asbestos. I dug out a copy of a HSI leaflet on the paper industry that gave exact details. The up-shot was that the procedure was introduced at last. There are further examples of the work done by H&S reps in the section below on my union reps courses. Much of this work is by reps acting a part of a parallel organisation to stewards, indeed some stewards are H&S reps.

Dual structures

There was much discussion some years ago about the dangers of this type of dual organisation. In practice the two parts re-inforce each other. There are problems in dual representation - the system of works council reps and

union reps are the classic case. This is already a potential difficulty with the introduction of works councils by the Euro Regs. Employers have always been keen on consultative committees like this, and of course the TUC and the Labour Party are also keen on the idea. This form of dual representation is a serious danger to workplace reps but H&S reps have generally resisted this danger.

Support groups

Another element in the set up is supporting organisations and it is clear that the Hazards movement has been driven right from the start by activists from the bottom and in spite of the disinterest shown by the TUC and their clique. There are many examples - asbestos dangers were exposed by union activists, Pat Kinnersley himself is an independent writer. Nancy Tait's husband worked for the PO and died from asbestos cancer. With the help of the union branch, she won substantial compensation and with it, set up SPAID - the Society for the Prevention of Asbestos Induced Disease, based in Enfield.

Since the 1970's, there has been a multitude of meetings, newspapers, conferences, books, research papers etc., without any substantial help from the official union leadership. They have always kept their distance, perhaps because they realise they cannot directly control the hazards activity. This is the generous interpretation, but there is another that says they did not want to disturb established cosy relations with employers.

The Congress House branch of the employers

The TUC has played a leading role in this situation. It's doctor sued the Hazards organisation over allegations made in Alan Dalton's excellent book *Asbestos - Killer Dust* in 1976. This resulted in the technical bankruptcy of the publishers, the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science or rather the *Hazards Bulletin*. Its newsletter had to be published under a new title, *Hazards*, and a correction put in all unsold copies of the book. The uncorrected book holds an honourable place on many bookshelves.

For many years the TUC pointedly ignored the Hazards publications in all their own appalling H&S material, which probably did them a favour. This was typical of the TUC attitude. The section at the TUC that was responsible for this was run by an old Stalinist, but this is an explanation, not an excuse. It was not until 1994 that the appointment of a new officer, Owen Tudor, resulted in a more open attitude.

Local groups

During the eighties, a network of H&S centres grew up, usually linked to a TU H&S group. There were, and are, reformist organisations, and the Coventry organisation C.H.A.S.M., mentioned earlier, set the pattern for many to follow. The attraction for revolutionaries was that the issue of workplace H&S was persistently played down by the union leadership but increasingly taken up by members. In CHASM it happened, the organisation became submerged in the union side and neglected wider

issues. As the scandals about TDI, asbestos, and cancer, asthma, became public, and the attitude of employers in over-riding legitimate concern over health at work gradually became apparent, and therefore awareness of the issues grew.

While in the Midlands, I worked with the Birmingham based Health and Safety Advice Centre, HASAC. As well as distributing their literature, I regularly took parties of reps to visit their premises. I encouraged close links with HASAC. Over the years, thousands of SS and H&S reps have been on my courses. Some have gone on to reach important positions, like Tommy Harte who went from being a steward and H&S rep at the Tubes company in Birmingham, to become a leading H&S campaigner.

Workers day

It was Tommy who saw the significance of the International Workers Day, 28 April, with its slogan *Remember the Dead but Fight for the Living*. This is getting increasing recognition both in North America when it started - I think the quote came originally from the legendary miners organiser, Mother Jones - and all over the world. Tommy was active in promoting BRUSH, Birmingham region union H&S committee, whose secretary was Eric Shakespeare, a 'communist' BL shop steward. This operated in a much more open manner than the Coventry CHASM. It has an office, several advice workers and welcomed visitors - in short it cut through the union bureaucracy effectively.

London group

The London Hazards Centre, LHC, has been a constant source of books, as well as its bi-monthly journal *Daily Hazard*. It does pioneering work and capitalises on very valuable research done as part of its advice service. On this subject, I worked with various other union members to set up the Campaign Against Hazards in London, [CAHIL]. The Centre itself is publicly funded and cannot undertake agitational work so CAHIL does this. I was the Secretary and later went onto the Management Committee of the LHC. This met every three months and nominally controls the full time employees. These were very dedicated people who work well in excess of requirements. They provided an irreplaceable service., but funding and other problems have causes an organisational decline in recent years.

Pluto and others

Pluto Press, as a small Left wing publisher, was very much outside official approval. Kinnersley's *Hazards at Work* was its first venture in the Workers Handbook series and more recently an Australian union manual on HASAW also owes its publication to them.

The Labour Research Dept, was strongly communist, and the WEA both produce literature on HASAW. LRD does regularly update its material, is best at guides to legislation. On the Euro Regs for example, it published a useful guide. The monthly *Labour Research* and *Bargaining Report* also

cover HASAW. LRD has over the years changed its role. From being a relatively independent and militant body - never socialist - it has gradually become an adjunct to the TUC. Its publications are still relevant but have a different orientation.

The WEA produces useful pamphlets on specific issues. The opportunity for rank and file publication is clearly limited, though there are occasional books like *Class, Health and Profit* by Ian Gibson, [1981, 108pp] who was an ISG member, and university lecturer later a Labour MP, then thrown out as too 'left' .

Conclusions and relevance today

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that H&S is a permanent problem for capitalism. The record regarding the well being of workers was at first comprehensively analysed by Frederick Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, Within advanced industrial society, this is still a scandal. It is worth repeating the damning statistic that occupational ill health appears to make up an astonishing one third of the total of all ill health.

What is more, as the physical damage from accidents at work begins a slow decline, the long term damage from exposure to substances like asbestos, repetitive strain injury and occupational stress, etc., continue a strong upward climb. Capitalism will always be vulnerable to this fact, and management's always anxious to hide it. This is an essential part of a case against capitalism.

Climate change

In recent years, there has been an awareness of the hazards of atmospheric pollution from the unrestrained use of resources. This is the same problem as that within the workplaces , only writ large. Industry is still irresponsible, the consequence is climate change of one form or another, and the response in general still faces the problem of profit stopping the necessary changes.

Environmental concerns have become a global problem. Pioneering work done in the workplaces have shown the advantage of direct action by rank and file groups and I am happy to record the progress of the Green movement despite the resistance of the reformist groups. Anti nuclear groups learnt the lesson quickly and others have followed - even so this problem is likely to take decades if not more to resolve. The early writings of the great libertarian activist Murray Bookchin deserve prime place here [Bookchin] & [Biehl]. We await developments.

Climate change is fast becoming a major social problem. The record of the hazards at work movement in taking direct action, raising popular consciousness and pushing for improvement at the cost of profits can be seen as a precedent for the current issue

This chapter examines the background on occupational health and safety at work, and tries to put my teaching work and my own role as a union H&S rep into that context. Some sections are specialised and may not be of general interest but are included because much of the information is not available elsewhere. The modern problem of atmospheric pollution is noted

Chapter Ten "Coal, not dole 1", strikes in context and detail.

A look at strikes in general and in particular the miners strike of 1984 - 85, probably one of the most significant disputes in the UK of the century. I have written elsewhere a long review of the literature it produced and on strike literature generally. In this chapter, I look at industrial work in a political context and give brief details of strikes and industrial action I have been involved in - Johnson Matthey, Wapping, Grunwicks, ambulance workers, Arnauti bakery workers, and so on. My views on strike support committees, are also looked at.

By 1984, I was ready to move down to London. Both my sons David and Peter were working in the capital, and paying big rents for at best average accommodation. The bookshop was doing less trade and it was increasingly difficult to get comrades to open it, even for a few hours a day. I had tried to get work in London to no avail. In the end I decided to sell up, get a house down there and commute up to the Midlands to work. I had made a few improvements to the house/shop and in the end I was able to sell the place for a modest profit. My mother had died in 1983 and I had £5,000 inheritance from that. I sold my canal boat and VW Camper van and was able to put up a good deposit. Hence I moved into South Tottenham.

I was able to let a room to Dave who was living with Breda by this time, and to Peter. I put it to them that it would be better to live as a group, and cheaper as there would be no increases and that they would get the benefit of rising prices of houses when I sold up or died. Both of them eventually moved out and I was able to "lend" some money to Peter and Kate to get their own place. I eventually paid up the mortgage in 1995 and was able to give all four some money to celebrate it. Subsequently, I was able to act as an interest free banker to both Dave and Pete.

Keele University

However in 1984, I continued to work at Solihull and had a week-day room with Dave Lyddon and Mary Issitt. As with other suitable comrades, I was able to put a small amount of work Dave's way. He finally got a full time job at Sunderland briefly but it was at Keele University where he became established. The work was partly academic but mainly with non TUC NHS union reps and the successful Distance Learning project. Some of my TUS course reps did take these courses.

Paul Smith also got a job there, as did Colin Whitston, brother of The Wizard. Very few places were employing known left wing lecturers as the rest of the Higher Education sections in Industrial Relations moved rightward, into Human Resources Management. The comrades at Keele have produced a journal, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, edited by

Dave Lyddon, which stands out from the trend and which I sell at various events in the London outpost.

Strikes

Turning now to the phenomena of the strike, this has always been a chance for socialists to speak to people in conflict with the system. The ideological points are developed later and here I examine those examples of industrial action that I have some recollection or record of. We end with the miner strike of 1984-85.

JM

The strike at Johnson Matthey in June 1969 was run by a hard line Stalinist Jerry O'Farrell, an AEU shop steward. I was senior or chief steward at the nearby Enfield Rolling Mills and visited the picket line virtually every day. The AEU members came out for recognition but the main union BISAFTA not only stayed in work but the union rep drove a vehicle at the picket line every day. Eventually the TUC Dispute Committee intervened and came down in favour of BISAFTA! I wrote a leaflet on JM profits and Jerry wrote "an outrage to trade unions" type letter to the Daily Mirror.

By the end of the dispute in defeat a year later, we were quite friendly. My article had made the front page of *Socialist Worker* in October 1969 and we sold a few copies on the picket line [I think!]. There was not a real party involvement in the dispute and I was acting virtually alone but effectively. There was a plan to write a history of the Strike which I outlined in my notebook. I itemised the headings -

- 1] the pre strike situation
- 2] the support from the AEU district and nationally
- 3] local solidarity from rail workers, etc, and cash collections
- 4] The combine committee, which was multi union and gave nominal support
- 5] the BISAFTA response, corruption, scabbing and national union as well
- 6] use of pirate tankers, contractors
- 7] TUC Disputes Committee and its collapse before reactionary unions
- 8] proposals keep on fighting, AEU and full support not just minimal,
- 9] international dimension, the gold element
- 10] reprint of leaflet and letters

Somehow the pamphlet never got written but we had made our mark. No one had been recruited but it was typical of the sort of work that we did, from the outside, which contributed to the expansion of our industrial base in the 1970's

Ms Desai's Asian workers at Grunwicks

Leaping forward a few years there was another dispute that was significant for a time, 1976 to 78. This was Grunwicks, involving my old union APEX. It had begun in a very confused way in August 1976 - workers dismissed for not obeying an order, walking out and a tiny picket line, growing by the day. The local Brent Trades [Union] Council had become important to the strikers who had subsequently enrolled in the union. The political complexion of APEX has been described earlier and the situation was aggravated by the fact that the local FTO was Len Gristey. He had covered Keith Blackmans until his habitual drunkenness and habit of agreeing with management had led to his being banned from the factory even by the weak APEX reps.

Grunwicks was a photographic development company employing mainly Asian women, and some students for peak periods. Years later it was still trading as *Bonusprint*. The management was autocratic and George Ward, the actual owner, was himself Asian, a fact skated over by black nationalists like Ron Ramdin in his lengthy but conventional history. All strikers were sacked, as the existing common law had allowed for centuries, even under Labour. The basic unfairness of this law essential to old style capitalism is something carefully hidden by union FTO's in periods of Conservative rule, as they blame "anti union laws".

The strike that went on for about two years, grew in significance, with mass pickets, marches and the inevitable vicious counter action by the police. It is widely believed that the re-birth of violent police attacks on strikers came with the Tories in 1979 but in fact "Old" Labour initiated it here. The Special Patrol Group, SPG, appeared for the first time and there were 550 arrests. Chants of "company police" led to many arrests. This included my MOT fitter Frank, who later ran his own business, and got a short sentence for picket line duty, as did Vic Seadon from Keith Blackmans. I was to work with Vic at the SWP Centre, driving vans for a short period in the 1980's and he has been a consistent union activist and rep, as outlined in *Fragments* [Woodward].

Pickets

It was regarding picketing that restrictions were most tightly drawn. The concept of "vocal provocation" was used to arrest not just those chanting but even protesting about police violence. This included my MP in Coventry, Audrey Wise who commented on a thug in blue dragging a woman along the ground. The battles of the 80's against the Tories were prefigured in 1977 against Labour, and still they have the nerve to stand for election !

Also the police began to insist on 6 people per gate. This was not law but had been proposed by the TUC in their *Guidelines* for disputes. Once again the labour leaders had done the capitalists job for them, and this figure has been incorporated into the Tory government guidelines. Many

police - and pickets - still believe it is the law, so it's always best to ask them "What law?" when they try to impose it.

Labour in its other role

Several other MP's visited the picket line including Neil Kinnock, in an earlier life as a champion of workers rights, and three government Ministers were seen in May. The Willesden post workers, in what was then the Union of Postal Workers, heroically refused for a period to cross a picket line until forced to by union leaders. They were very bitter about that, one commented that the union General Secretary had achieved something that Ward and the police had failed to do - make them break a picket line. The turn out from both local workplaces and indeed all over the country was very impressive. We sent a coach down from Coventry and the IS comrades were in a minority.

The issue was referred to the government conciliation body ACAS, whose moderate report was challenged in the Courts and predictably thrown out. The strike was eventually betrayed by Apex leader Roy Grantham, ably assisted by the TUC General Council and the Labour government.

Legal defence = useless in law

The significance of the dispute in national terms was that it exposed the predicted faults in Labour's legislation for union recognition in the Employment Protection Act, section 11. This depended on a ballot of workers, but made no enforceable provision if the employers refused to hold one. The union legal rights were lamentable weak as I, and everyone else who examined them had said. I used my analysis of the weakness of the law on my union reps courses. The prevailing attitude had been that Labour could not have been that stupid, and even after Grunwicks I must admit that my views didn't cut much ice among the majority of union members.

In practical terms, Albert Booth, the "left wing" Employment Minister, and the Labour government stood by and watched the bosses and the Courts smash their law. Worker rights had a low priority. The limitations of Labourism was very openly exposed

George Ward had enlisted the help of the National Association for Freedom, NAFF, who masterminded the legal actions. This was run by [now Sir] John Gorst, who has since been posing as a conventional, even dissenting, Member of Parliament in a bid to keep his seat. The Thatcher programme of legal "regulation" of unions was pioneered here, and the action was supported by Sir Keith Joseph. Curiously, James Prior, later Employment Minister under Thatcher, and who was a member of APEX, gave support to the ACAS Report, for what it was worth.

Freedom!

NAFF was founded by Ross McWhirter who had taken action against Enfield Council's introduction of comprehensive schools. Others involved

were journalist Peregrine Worsthorne, cricketer Alec Bedser who opposed the West Indians playing in Britain, and MP's Rhodes Boyson, Jill Knight and 'Winston' Churchill. Margaret Thatcher attended the inaugural dinner and other functions. NAFF's policy for the 1976 budget was the ending of all subsidies for the poor for food and housing, and for school meals; scrapping aid to poorer countries and regional unemployment benefit, and cuts to education and health. It was in favour of abolishing company and capital gains tax and more military spending! There is more on all this in book like the one by Dromey.

Consequences

Some other details of the strike. It was the start of the career of a local advice worker and "communist" Jack Dromey who was secretary of the Brent Trades Council. Typically his progress towards the right wing proceeded apace and by the 1990's he was challenging the extremely moderate Bill Morris for leadership of the T&GWU. With his partner Harriet Harman, he was also notorious for deserting Labour run schools to send his offspring to the privileged "pubic schools".

Media coverage of strikes was highlighted by *BBC News* reader Angela Rippon's reference to "trade unionists and other extremists" and a *Money Programme* that excluded information and interviews on the striker while concentrating on the management position. ITV's *London Programme* gave better coverage.

The slippery Scargill

It was at Grunwicks that I first came across Arthur Scargill who had won fame in 1972 at Saltley Gate in Birmingham. At Grunwicks, there were regular mass pickets which had a big psychological effect. I remember in one of them I lost my shoe - I had forgotten to put my boots on - and had to hop about till the scrum ended. At one of the biggest of these in June or July 1977, Arthur Scargill led a large proportion of the pickets away to a rally in a local park. In their absence, the scab busses went in. When he came back, Arthur got an earful from me and about 20 other comrades. Unlike his position on Polish coal and miners strikes, I think he has still not admitted his mistake on this issue.

Mrs Desai was the strike leader, a tiny Asian woman, who physically confronted the police in well publicised photos. She saw the strike sold out by the union leadership and learnt the lesson. During the equally long running Burnsall's strike in Smethwick in 1994, she spoke out at the way the GMB FTO's ran the strike without any strikers or a committee of strikers. The Grunwicks strike committee was 15 strong with Dromey and Gristey having no vote. The GMB had taken over APEX in the meantime.

Printworkers

Following close on the miners strike came the Great Wapping disaster in 1986/7. Rupert Murdoch of News International fame was determined to break the power of the Fleet Street print workers and move his print

workers from there to the East End. It was an enormously publicised strike but was a dispute that I never really got into. I was living five days a week in Coventry when it began in January 1986 and on returning to London in April, I quickly got onto the *Haringey Printers Support Committee*. I attended this for some months but it ran out of ideas. Coming so soon after the miners strike, there were a multitude of support committees set up. The SWP was distributing a leaflet encouraging their formation. Locally there was one in Enfield and a public meeting was held in Barnet with a group of collected sponsors.

Mass pickets

We would go down to Fortress Wapping on Saturdays, but there were also marches on Wednesdays. My final attendance was on 24 January 87 - I had been diagnosed as having cancer the day before and I went into hospital on the Monday. I was out of action when the strike was called off.

The Fleet Street printers, though not attacked in the media for obvious reasons, were in fact quite active as a radical lot. The *Sun* workers did take action when the miners were grossly attacked by the editor Kelvin Mackenzie. They went on strike when Rupert Murdoch moved production of four newspapers to 'Tower Hamlets' as *News International* liked to call it. See the O'Connell and Rennie article in *Fragments 1* [Woodward]. Here I examine the treacherous role of the full timer union stall then reprint recollections of involvement in the support groups from Dave Morris and his 'Picket' group and myself as an active member in the local group.

The National Union

Brenda Dean, the SOGAT printers union General Secretary, had been to the USA and seen personally the effect of journalists directly inputting news rather the typesetters. The setting up of the premises had been done with great secrecy and profuse denials but there were two union activists who got in, and several spies as well. All their information was reported to the union full time staff, who could see massive membership losses looming up. Some actually tried to get strikes going but the full time shop stewards, or 'Fathers of the Chapel,' were convinced they could fight off the new technology and swung the vote against action.

Their role

It is pretty clear that at least some of the Union staff knew what was going to happen and kept quiet. When at last the printers did act, they were sacked instantly, a great money saver for NI. It was all lawful under common law. Brenda Dean has been rewarded by extremely well paid employment in the State, and personal Honours, and who says treason ?

Evidence

It was much later that evidence of the conspiracy emerged. The solicitor's letter advising the sacking strategy in some detail - the complicity of the EETPU FTO's who recruited scab staff, went on management trips to the

USA and provided a cover for Murdoch - the police mass repression from 2 days before the strike began, etc, etc.

The rank and file published their own newsletter *Picket* which was produced from the Tottenham Community Project in Tottenham High Road, then Houseman's Bookshop. This gave rousing stories of the resistance, and flying pickets ventures. Scabs were named, and their addresses, phone numbers and pubs were published. The pickets called the police *Paper Boys* and made up songs about them, as my HPSC notes reveal. There is a booklet with this title, still selling years later. Some of the groups also called themselves 'paper boys' and one subsequently told stories of van ambushes and dumping commandeered bundles of paper in the Welsh Harp lake on the North Circular Road

I also have most of the first 27 issues of *Picket*, plus the odd issue of the "refuseniks" journalist's *Wapping Post* and a vitriolic publication called *The Sun* published by some active anarchists. There are some HPSC circulars as well. Below are thoughts collected for a memorial meeting some decades on

**"Memories of Wapping , the Haringey experience
- a document prepared for the meeting on 26 Feb 09**

Introduction

The printworkers strike/lockout occurred soon after the miners strike of 1984-5. In Haringey, like in most parts of London, there had been a very active Miners Support Committee. That Committee had involved a wide range of local groups and activists, mostly working together pretty well. There were some internal tensions as the Committee was largely under the control of the Haringey Trades Union Council (at the time controlled by members of Communist Party of Great Britain). Many members of the Tottenham Claimants Union (TCU) and users of the Unemployed Workers Centre (628 High Rd, N17) were also very active in the Miners Support Committee. The TCU members were themselves in dispute with the Communist Party as they believed that the unemployed users, not the HTUC/CP officials, should have control over the Unemployed Workers Centre.

When the printworkers dispute started, a Haringey Printworkers Support Committee was set up under the auspices of the Trades Union Council. Some TCU members got involved with that Committee, but others gradually made their own direct links with Wapping strikers and pickets, and offered their direct support

Below I summarise, from a libertarian perspective, some of the Haringey support for the Wapping strikers/pickets from two different perspectives in action.

Dave Morris writes: *In the mid-1980s Tottenham Claimants Union was a*

very active and independent organisation of the unwaged and unemployed, meeting on a daily basis in the Haringey Unemployed Workers Centre. We were involved in a wide range of social, welfare and political activities including supporting workers' struggles. Following our heavy involvement in miners support, many of us were keen to support the Wapping workers in what was clearly going to become a highly significant protracted and militant battle involving daily picketing of sometimes thousands of strikers. Some of us were also involved with a local libertarian activist collective, Haringey Community Action.

Members of HCA and TCU wanted to make direct contact with strikers, but early visits to picket lines had not been promising as the Union officials in the dispute (who were mainly Communist Party members) seemed to be discouraging any independent or 'unofficial' support networks. At one large demonstration I witnessed a Union Official during a speech try to denounce a group of unsatisfied hecklers as 'probably agent provocateurs in the pay of the CIA'

However, at a meeting in Central London I met printworker Amie Mintz who, with another NGA general trade printer, was trying to encourage pickets to do their own news bulletins independently of the Union officials. He was looking for active encouragement and support as he hadn't done anything like it before. He eventually launched the weekly PICKET bulletins, written entirely by and for those picketing, financed by public donations. There were 43 issues produced right up to the end of the dispute, up to 5,000 copies each edition, mainly 2 sides A4, densely-packed, no-frills, militant daily participants' reports of the many demonstrations, pickets, flying pickets and any other direct actions.

The message was 'its up to us to speak for ourselves, spread the dispute, and to take any action necessary to win'. This struck a chord with all those in the dispute. The entire series of bulletins can be read at :

<http://libcom.org/history/picket-bulletin-wapping-printers-strike-1986-1987>

They were fantastically popular with those on strike and on the picket lines. As a result of the contacts we'd made, and our offer of unconditional support, our small group from Haringey got invited to join the picketing (which we did at least 2 or 3 times a week), and often helped hand out the PICKET bulletins to pickets. They were grabbed out of our hands and passed amongst all present. We also joined in some of the middle-of-the-night mass flying pickets around London, Brighton, Midlands etc which aimed and often succeeded in closing down Murdoch distribution depots by any effective means to hand.

I was told by those producing PICKET that the Communist Party union officials were pissed off that the pickets had their own independent and outspoken paper, but that they couldn't suppress it as it was fully backed by the 'rank and file' union membership. Fairly early on the editors asked us in the Tottenham Claimants Union if they could use our address (c/o the

Unemployed Workers Centre) as the contact address for PICKET. We agreed. However after a number of further editions, Communist Party officials in Tottenham launched an incoherent and ludicrous attack on PICKET and on the Claimants Union !

This led to a protracted local dispute, ending up with the Claimants Union setting up our own Unwaged Centre in 72 West Green Road N15, and the eventual closure of the Unemployed Workers Centre. PICKET's publication address was switched to that of Housmans Bookshop at 5 Caledonian Road, N1. Our small group from Tottenham continued to attend Wapping picket lines and demonstrations until the end of the dispute.

In the 1970s (when I was a union activist in the Post Office), and up to the early 1980s, I had been involved in an independent libertarian workers' solidarity group, the London Workers Group. We had encouraged and supported workers to take direct control of their disputes themselves, take militant action, do their own leaflets and papers, etc. 4 or 5 of our 40 or so members were printworkers themselves. This bulletin was everything we had for years been arguing for in strikes etc, and could have helped inspire other similar initiatives in other future disputes.

Alan Woodward writes : *I had just moved back into the borough from the Midlands that Easter and therefore was not familiar with the local background . I went to the fortnightly meetings of the Haringey Printworkers Support Committee and acted with them. The HPSC organised several activities, and gave out many leaflets calling on people to support the Boycott of the Murdoch newspapers at WH Smiths , and such like . Also they*

- *Produced regular bulletins, Number 5 for example included - references to the links with the local ClearVu strikers, announced 50,000 leaflets to be produced ; gave details about distribution and flyposting , acknowledged local support, confirmed committee meetings*
- *organised public meetings including the big one at Hornsey Town Hall on 9 June 1986 "The Truth behind Barbed Wire" , where there were several speakers including Carol Hall. deputy Mother of the Chapel [shop steward] of the Times Clerical chapel, Alf Parrish, a full time official from the National Graphical Association, Vic Cooke from the AEUW Co-ordinating Committee, Martha Osamore, a councillor with links to the Broadwater Farm estate community and Alf Salisbury a local CPGB member . Tony Benn was billed to speak but did not*
- *Had a well organised leafleting Rota for 8 places in the borough, which took place at the weekend ; support for this was sought with rota support leaflets*
- *Made regular trips to Wapping every Saturday nights , including a*

coach for the more important ones like 14 June. This left at 8 to 830 p and returned at 3 am !

- ❑ *Collection sheets were printed and circulated and returned to Paul Lefley HTUC Secretary , or Peter Lambert. I have no record of monies raised by these*
- ❑ *Did frequent flyposting tours using the "rolled up" method" ;*

Police violence was not just exercised at the well guarded picket at Fortress Wapping. They would raid nearby pubs and select out anyone who looked like a supporting picketer. These would be roughed up and/or then arrested on trumped up assault charges that were , and probably still are, a feature of their actions . In retaliation, groups of us would wander round the back street hoping to find a police car or two. Once spotted these would be pelted with stones and small bricks until they made a hasty exit.

The Saturday night expeditions were not that successful as a whole as the police had perfected their techniques from the miners strike but examples of their violence still found there way to the courts

Saturday January 87 ; this was a big demonstration /mass picket. Very large numbers turned up , including football supporters from West , Millwall, Chelsea and Charlton. There was heavy stoning of police lines and severe restriction on their activity. I was there, very active , but on the following Monday was whisked into hospital for an operation for the removal of a cancer , then 10 months of chemo therapy, so had to drop out. The strike continued."

Uniformed thugs

Finally a note on the police. There were several police riots where anyone - man, women or child - was battered. I personally saw several such attacks including two SPG men bludgeon down with truncheons two youngsters from behind before retreating. I was throwing stones over the pickets, though at least one fell short, and we caught a police car in a back street and smashed its windscreen. These were battles in an urban context, not way out in the country like the miners. The police often came off worse when attacked by an enraged crowd. They retaliated by picking off people in pubs and walking home. They would just raid a pub and beat up anyone with badges or who looked like a dissenter. This I felt was a disaster to compare with the miners in the short term.

A few years later

One model dispute which was politically quite important was that of the ambulance workers in 1989-90. I was active in the Enfield area and we had some links with the CLP and Enfield Trades Union Council. We set up an Ambulance Support Group and tied this in with our SWP work of collecting money, visiting workplaces, taking round the occasional delegations, etc. I usually chaired the meetings of the EASG and Paul Rennie, of the EnTUC, was ad hoc secretary.

Our local ambulance station was quite conservative and resisted our attempts to take the dispute beyond the work to rule, and into all out strike. They thought they could defeat us by running a straw poll in Enfield town centre about what they should do next. To their amazement, but our expectation, the citizens of Enfield said they should go out on strike. We heard less about "public support" after that.

Meanwhile the dispute was progressing. I fixed up a public meeting with Paul Foot as speaker, at the end of a Day of Action. An FTO from NUPE who was a platform speaker launched a long and vitriolic attack on the SWP in general and me in particular. Because of our work, this provoked a reaction. In one factory, we had initiated weekly collections which the stewards had tied in with a weekly raffle. It collected several hundreds of pounds every week and £8000 in total.

Criticism

So the FTO was strongly criticised for being sectarian and we emerged smiling from this big meeting. Paul Foot had tried to patch things up but the NUPE man went off muttering. He "took" early retirement 2 years later. However I have found no satisfactory full length account of the ambulance workers dispute. I think the significance of the ambulance dispute is that it marked the end of the period of union retreat. Public support, the solidarity in the workplaces where huge amounts of money were collected, the unpopularity of the government, the readiness of health workers to take industrial action, all combined to signal the end of extreme Thatcherism. This came with the Poll Tax in the following year.

Council victimisation of racist and SWP paralysis

I am including here a short note about what could have been a strike for something that appeared at face value as a simple case of victimisation but had other motives at its heart. In the years after the Broadwater Farm riots, the backlash was considerable and had not been opposed in any effective way by the Labour / Communist parties nor predictably by the union leadership either.

And so it was that Haringey Council framed a known racist dustman and sacked him. It was a clear case of victimisation, as he was the main union rep. I argued that we should oppose the Council and its trumped up allegations and wrote a leaflet - this said that the sacking, as a frame up, was wrong, that racism was objectionable because it was unfair and divisive, and that the dustmen should unite with various black citizens with whom they had more in common than in difference. Moreover, if bosses got away with this who would be next? This went down like a lead balloon with the John B and the local SWP leadership but it may have thwarted a plan to issue a standard anti racist leaflet. In the end the issue just petered out and injustice was not only done but a political issue also submerged.

Teachers on strike

One final example of the inflexible and obsessional attitude to the "drop the R&F" decision, even when the facts called for a variation, came in the 1990's. FE colleges were privatised in these years and this was invariably accompanied by attacks of lecturer's conditions by the new owners. This was a nationwide phenomena. It was clear that all virtually all NATFHE members were facing the same fight and it seemed obvious to me that there was a case for publishing a R&F paper. I argued for this at R&F meetings but it was a year before the SWP was forced by the non Party comrades to produce even one. I certainly found the "Fight the New Contracts" Newsheet very useful. I think that its late appearance made a little but not crucial difference in the end to what was a heroic struggle.

Our dispute at Hounslow College rumbled on for a couple of years. After the colleges were privatised, the College Employers Federation began to impose its new contract on staff. This involved a total teaching hours of 1050 per year, instead of 756, entirely open ended contracts about hours of work, reduced holidays, and some very restrictive clauses about other work, intellectual property and so on. I became branch secretary as other people pulled out but the Old Guard of the NATFHE branch resisted plans for all out industrial action, preferring instead a useless "work to contract".

The college branch - by now renamed West Thames College - was run by old style right wing CPers who had lived for years in a comfortable local authority based environment. When Mick Carter and I had been declared redundant a few months after starting work, it seemed that the days of comfortable management were over. Mick and I fought a 2 year battle, using some energy to keep our jobs but the NATFHE local officers did not seem to learn anything from this.

The crisis came in the summer of 1995 when the Principal negotiated a new contract which was much better than the CEF one. The branch negotiators tried to force its acceptance by saying that the only alternative was all out strike which would have isolated the college even from the national resistance that was preparing for 3 day strikes during enrolment. I led a fight back, saying that a third alternative. This was rejecting the proposal and preparing for strike action after a planned campaign in the autumn term.

This meant some energetic organising against the branch leadership and getting together people I had come across as part of my H&S duties. At the union meeting there was much excitement and fierce debate. In the event, the committee's recommendation was overturned and a better contract [just about] was negotiated. It was an interesting example of rank and file action against the CP, though one of their number was an ex IS member Peter Rowlands. Unfortunately my health deteriorated and I was not able to use the victory to the full advantage. I left work the following year.

Arnaouti bakery workers

Coming lastly right at the end of the period, was a strike by local bakery workers, I wrote an account in a quickly produced booklet that was later re-printed along with another account by a Haringey Solidarity group member, Steve from Unison, in the HTUC volume on local workers history. His account was published in *Black Flag* in 1997. The original booklet just missed the end of the strike and proceeds were then to be donated to the still running Liverpool Dockers Strike. It was a model document, illustrated, with copies of all leaflets, notes on where and how money collections were made, and a map and details of our attempted solidarity visits to the main pitta bread customer Tesco. The union staff official, a member of Scargill's SLP, acted in a totally conventional pattern, his only initiative being a report in the Morning Star.

I reproduce below some paragraphs from my document -

"The five week strike by 65 pitta bread bakers in April and May 1997 was a heroic example of industrial action by immigrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. Over ninety percent were from Somalia and all were men except one casual worker. Many spoke only a few words of English and only a fraction were in the bakery workers union, BFAWU, at the start. They walked out on Sunday 13 April, without the required ballot, in protest at the appalling conditions and a change in meal break arrangements. Previous strikes had been short lived and unsuccessful. In the end Arnaouti ignored the employers Federation, galvanised into action by the main customer Tesco, and the government conciliation service, ACAS, and sacked everyone on the day after the election.

The conditions in the bakery were a brilliant demonstration of the situation the Tory regime secured for employers at the end of their project - a pay rate of £3.37 an hour for day workers and a 37p addition for night shift; a contracted 72 hour week comprising six 12 hour shifts; if work ran out workers were sent home without pay regardless of the time; two weeks holiday after 12 months service but only for the permanent staff, the worse off casuals got nothing, not even bank holiday pay; any time taken off sick was deducted from the two weeks holiday. There was no sick pay or pension. The temperature in the bakery was always high and in the summer of 1996, there were people collapsing every day. Hygiene at Arnaouti was suspect with Tesco sending around Food Inspectors after the company employed scabs - who had dubious qualifications - from the HMS Agency. It seems there had been a Cook Report on the dodgy hygiene some years ago.

The Strike

When the strike broke out, the union official - an SLP member - was away on a course in Europe. Paddy Hill's perspective was to pressurise the management and he had not explained the procedure about striking to the core of union members. It came as a great surprise for them to learn about

unlawful unballoted strikes and they wanted to legitimise themselves immediately. Unfortunately this would involve going back to work which effectively meant losing the strike.

The FTO's programme of action was to keep the strikers in the union and, if possible, to win the dispute. Meanwhile he used ACAS to intervene and set up talks. To an extent this was successful, as the strikers were offered their jobs back pending "negotiations" They rejected this. The main customer was Tesco who took 90% of the pitta bread and the FTO attempted to carefully coerce the supermarket by a threatened "public awareness" campaign. This was never to see the light of day as Tesco hid behind ACAS and the employers Federation

"Coal , not dole " and in perspective

So we come now to the main item - the great miners strike of 1984 and 1985. The events are fairly well known but can be briefly re-stated. Miners have traditionally been the shock troops of the labour movement and have served it well. The National Union of Mineworkers strikes in 1972 and 74 were responsible for defeating first the Tory government's incomes policy and then the Government itself. The Tories planned revenge as outlined in the secret Ridley plan drawn up in 1977. Thatcher carefully avoided confrontation in 1981 but made extensive preparation for the '84 strike.

Yorks

The Yorkshire miners began their action when it was announced that Corton Wood pit was to be closed. Millions had been spent in modernisation and the action was intended as provocation. Arthur Scargill warned that wholesale closures were planned, but this was denied. History has proved Scargill was telling the truth, and the employers and Government were lying. The media obediently followed the line, Zeig heil. Other NUM regions were picketed out or came out except Nottinghamshire who used the excuse that a ballot had not been held. Breakaway right-wing unionism had ruled in the area under Labour MP George Spencer in the 30's. The media who never have a ballot on any policy decision or leader, screamed about "no democracy". It was clearly a fight to the death and Notts miners sided with the Tories. It was therefore a subject viewed with some ambivalence when Major closed down much of the Notts coal field in the 90's.

TUC, etc

From the outset, support from the union leadership was far from total. The TUC raised no money and organised no support despite some rousing conference speeches. Other leaders settled their disputes for a few pence extra, because the Tories did not want the struggle to spread. Even unions like the T&GWU and Firefighters who tried to mobilise support could not break their established routines. Individually much money was raised, both officially and unofficially as thousands of union reps made weekly

collections. However supporting industrial action did not happen. The Labour Party leadership - Ken Livingston's Old Labour that is - criticised "the violence on both sides" while miners were killed on the picket line, police rioted and injured thousands.

Scargill tried to invoke the ideas of Sattley Gate of 1972 , getting other workers out in support but it has subsequently emerged that the CPGB members in the NUM obstructed this. There were mass pickets all over the country but the biggest confrontation was at Orgreave between the miners alone and the "armed" police. By illegal methods, the police won both the confrontation and the issue over picketing.

Reserves

The coal stocks had been built up beforehand and lasted out. The strike went on for 12 months then with increasing numbers going back, the miners returned to work. A narrow defeat but enough for the Tories to proceed with mass closures. Scandals rumbled on for some years, the political police involvement was slowly unravelled along with that of the biggest criminal in history, Robert Maxwell, through his Press interests. My own account is detailed below [Woodward] and in particular see Dave Douglas for a critique of Scargill in later years.

Strikes under capitalism

Before looking at some points arising from the dispute it is necessary to examine the role of strikes. The strike is the most traumatic event in capitalism. The system is based on workers selling their labour from which profit is made, and so on. With the strike, workers are refusing to work, and this undercuts the economic rationale. Even worse, the action precipitates a confrontation in which the normal controls which ensure social conformity are suddenly and dramatically broken. For many the result will be merely the development of political scepticism, or perhaps a sense of defeat but for others it can result in a powerful conversion to revolutionary consciousness. For committed revolutionary socialists, this is a chance to build the organisation - so special attention is paid to the strike. Those early socialists like Hyndman and the SDF who regarded the strike as a diversion from revolution could not have been more wrong.

The capitalist role

The job of the capitalist is a difficult and exacting one. Firstly people have to be forced to work for a living. This means that mechanisms like land enclosures to drive families away from self sufficiency by farming, or poll taxes to enforce the need for cash, have to be used. Once in the workplaces, labour must be paid enough to sustain itself, but also to reproduce to ensure a constant supply of future workers. Anything extra paid out in wages reduces profit and possible investment, so a careful balance must be maintained. Then there is competition. The common interest in keeping labour down internationally cannot disguise the fact that capitalist A is fighting capitalist B for market share. Should completely

"free" trade be allowed, or can some markets be protected ? More problems....

Labour control

However the major difficulty is controlling labour. Human beings have always sought to satisfy material needs but also to control their lives. This is a major lesson from history. Earliest man sought explanations, and naturalist religion is a more reasonable answer than the personal deities that followed them and still plague the world today. A desire to control your own life is one of the real and universal natural phenomena in a world filled with rubbish about "human nature". Indeed a central part of revolutionary theory concerns the idea of "alienation" or the lack of such control. It should be a source of apprehension for advance capitalism that once the more material needs are satisfied, the more control become an issue. Craft and professional workers have always tried to establish rules for their own control of their work from metalworkers to doctors.

Capitalism not only forces labour to serve a tight regular schedule of long, daily attendance in unpleasant surroundings, it also requires a rigid observance of the procedures for production of goods or services. Workplace discipline, sometimes just for the sake of discipline, features universally under capitalism, chiefly over punctual attendance. Over time this regulation increasingly removes personal initiative in every job. Hence capitalism, as well as being unfair and exploitative, is un-natural. It can only be viewed as a stage in development to be replaced in the future by a system of collective and creative socialism, even if it takes a revolution to do so.

Present day

However back in the jungle of the present, capitalists who own everything are very few in number and must take steps to prevent the vast majority from combining against them. The vast majority are the workers who must sell their labour on the market in order to live. The strike is the embryo of such combination and spells danger for the privileged few. Socialists have traditionally believed that effective control of the many by the few is achieved by the three "F"'s : force, fraud and farce. These can be looked at in the context of the long miners strike in the UK from 1984 to 1985.

Here the unionised workers challenged the capitalists, who marshalled the armed force of the State against them. The use of armed force to crush dissent has been a feature of class society for thousands of years. Capitalism has merely refined the process and made it more efficient. State socialists see the organisation of a state over and above the productive process as a necessity to supplement the obvious inadequacies of the market as a social mechanism, as well as to enforce its dominance.

However socialist libertarians regard the idea of smashing the State with a dual function. Firstly it symbolises the political defeat of capitalism. Secondly it emphasises that a social and equitable organisation of society

without the operation of the market, no longer needs a State to administer and control.

Force

The miners strike was characterised by the brutal and often illegal use of force. The armed forces of the State are used with little or no regard for legality when there is political or social crisis. This was such a crisis - a physical confrontation had been deliberately sought, and the ruthless and illegal use of police action in this year was like something out of Nazi Germany - illegal arrests and road blocks, detention, irregular court orders, torture of arrested miners, unlawful entry into houses, mass phone tapping, harassment of supporters and so on. Some of this was "remedied" years later by police payments and it was the biggest single event in the collapse of public confidence in the police but this is little compensation. Incidentally, the illegal use of the political police in the miners dispute is an aspect that only subsequently came to light, aided by Seamus Milne's excellent book .

Their bloody history

Of course we should not be surprised to see such a display. Capitalists have historically been very free with the sword in events like the Luddites, Peterloo, and the British record in the Colonies is knee deep in blood. Ireland combines both elements. Massacres like Bloody Sunday in 1972 saw demonstrators and passers-by shot down selectively, mostly in the back, by the elite forces of the State, the Paratroopers. Their commander was awarded a medal in the next Honours List to show Prime Minister Edward Heath's approval of the murders. It should not be forgotten that non convicted Irish prisoners were subject to torture techniques - taken straight from the Stalinist prisons of the 1930's - in 1971 and ten years later, prisoners were allowed to starve themselves to death to prove the superiority of UK government policy.

Force then is a major weapon in the hands of capitalism to retain their control, chiefly in periods of crisis. In exceptional circumstances, capitalists may resort to the massive and ruthless use of force through fascism or nazi-ism, to see it through the rebellions of large numbers of workers. The NAZIs and German business interests are the best example . Usually in less hectic circumstances, more sophisticated means are used. It is clear that armed force cannot control the population against their will on a permanent basis. People must be persuaded that the capitalism brings its own rewards, their consent needs to be manufactured.

Theory

The Italian marxist Antonio Gramsci devoted some time to studying this process. Capitalists ensure that their ideas - about the fairness and opportunity, etc., in existing society - are dominant among the population by the careful manipulation of influential forces. This hegemony, or domination to use a technical expression, involves political means and is

considered over and above the more standard economic measures. Quite clearly the best recruitment agency for capitalism is economic security. Satisfy basic material needs and most people will be happy, but of course there are usually economic and financial reasons why this is generally not possible for many workers over long periods .

Myths and institutions

So it becomes necessary to construct political , or ideological, myths which appear to gain popular consent for the regime. Gramsci identified that such myths had to be based partly on reality but proportions, causes, effects, appearances were altered to build a false interpretation. Moreover this false consciousness must be in part beneficial to those who hold it, but of course the greater benefit goes to the capitalist.

Phoney ideas

Two examples may help explain this. "*Free speech is a cornerstone of a free society*" or something similar. Now free speech for most readers of this book will be the right to stand up on a wet street corner and tirade against the Tories and Labour. This is much better than being imprisoned for dissent as in fascist states. However the major beneficiaries of this idea are the capitalists who control the television and newspapers. Their "free speech" is the virtually untrammelled right to influence opinion by massive daily doses of capitalist propaganda in papers and on TV.

Secondly comes the concept of "*a fair days wage for a fair days work*". Again good pay is preferable to low pay but our idea of fairness is generally related to what our relatives, neighbours or acquaintances get. Most people compare their pay with others in similar positions. They do not make comparisons to those who are very rich, or those on unearned income or the royal family. If "fair" means being paid the full value of your labour, then capitalism cannot work. Its central feature is that you are paid less than the full value of your labour and the rest goes in the capitalists pocket. None the less, the great myth of "fair" pay is 90% dominant in society.

Ideology

Hence the fraud part of capitalist control consists of the construction of false ideas about society. Some are big - that the State is a neutral force, above the control of any element in society - and some of lesser significance, but all are false and part of the capitalist hegemony of ideas, which we have in our heads.

The hegemony is constructed through various mechanisms. Firstly, the socialisation by the older generation of the younger. Who better to pass on "accepted social values" than your parents ? Religion is useful, "the rich man in his castle, the poor man at the gate", etc.. Education, where we are selected, trained and qualified for a suitable role in society also plays its part. Socialists however see 'education' as preventing people from getting certain types of work, schools are excluders in fact.

The dual role of the union

Finally one part of the functions of trade unions is to carry out a degree of socialisation. Union leaders must accept the legitimacy of the employers and management to negotiate with them, and of course, unofficial and political strikes cannot be approved by a national committee, they're not in the Rulebook or Agreement ! In severe social crises, such as Germany or Britain in 1919, the union leadership have been shown as the greatest defenders of capitalism, and the worst repressor of working class action.

'Normality'

In less dramatic circumstances, union leaders can be relied upon to keep workers down. The miners strike was the moment when the labour movement confronted the Tory government in what was a set piece battle. Of course the TUC and the majority of the union leadership had for years been anxious to break the power of the rank and file and strengthen their own autonomy in the negotiations process. In their perspective, the key role of the union leadership was to act as a mediating force between the 'balanced' force of workers and employers, "*to manage the discontent*" of the members, as Wright Mills put it.

They wanted to resume this traditional role without the embarrassment of seeing the miners defeat a government in a pay dispute or dockers reduce the law of the land over industrial action to a worthless scrap of paper. The power of the union shop stewards and their members had to be broken and they were going to do their best to make sure this was the occasion.

The Left better than the right ?

Some of the 'better' union leaders did not have this perspective, and they were able to see the consequences of a major defeat for workers. Their problem was that they had for so long been controlling the members that a sudden lurch into supporting action was such a change that members did not respond. If union leaders insist that industrial action is quite separate from political action and that miners are distinct from dockers or car workers and all the rest of the reformist nonsense, then out of the blue an appeal is launched for solidarity action, it should be no surprise that there is a limited response. As revolutionary socialists have argued for years, what unites right and left union leaders heavily outweighs what distinguishes them.

So the fraudulent idea that the miners must be left alone to conduct their struggle was the dominant ideology of the union leadership. Just how false that idea was to prove to the interests of workers was to be shown in subsequent years.

Seriously though

The third part of the capitalist strategy is *farce*. This is the only way to describe one specific part of false awareness, that which describes our society as a "democracy", under the 'control' of parliament. The idea that there is equality between the richest millionaire and the worker because both have equal power to vote for their member of parliament, is so

obviously absurd that I would defy anyone to honestly defend it. The idea that there is a "choice" between Tories who totally rip off people, and Labour who only rip off people 99% is equally un-defendable. As someone said "if voting changed anything, they'd have abolished it years ago". The real power lies in the Board Rooms of the big enterprises and institutions, and nobody but a small clique of their mates elects the people who sit there.

Nobody is elected

Non elected people run the country while politicians are largely their puppets. Companies, departments of state, institutions, media services, banks, Stock Exchange, etc, are in no way subject to any form of leadership election or accountability to the majority or any part of society. The only institutions who do elect their leaders and have collective decisions are unions, the subject of an unfair system of legal regulation of common law and the additional laws of both major parties. A comparison between union reps who are regularly re-elected and controlled by their workplace members, and the non elected, self seeking bosses who run society, shows where "democracy" really resides.

Imagine this

It would be an interesting exercise for an incoming 'Labour' government to apply the same degree of regulation - ballots on decisions and leaders and so on - that have been imposed on unions onto all social institutions. Imagine - popular ballots on all the items on the company's agenda ! That would be genuine reformism but readers are not advised to hold their breathe waiting for it. Capitalist democracy remains a farce.

Legality

The same verdict can be made of the so called "rule of law". Law in capitalist society means the defence of property and we all know who owns most of that. Employment law re-enforces the right of the employer to sack employees for any or no reason. It offers an incomplete, un-enforceable and largely unknown miscellany of "rights" in return. Inside and outside of the workplace, the corruption of non elected judges, the jungle of non regulation, the appalling delays, the prohibitive costs of taking retaliatory legal action, mean that "legality" is a sick joke. As a worker, voter, student, citizen, union member, consumer, tenant or house buyer, we are systematically ripped off at every turn.

Common belief despite the media

It is therefore no surprise to find that an overriding degree of cynicism and scepticism is the growing response to force, fraud and farce. Anger is also rising, which revolutionaries welcome as it make their job easier. Workplaces where capitalism necessarily treats people collectively, and where the production process operate are the most fertile grounds for agitation. There is moreover an obvious weapon, the strike which is where we started this discourse.

Constructing consent

Strikes are the best way to cut through the manufacture of consent. All the work of the education system, religion, the parliamentary diversion and the careful negotiating of the union leadership is stripped away when members of the working class face the employers across the picket line. Those staunch defenders of wealth and property, the police and army, do more to reveal the real nature of the profit making society than a hundred books. The ideology of capitalism, which offers a few crumbs to workers in return for their acquiescence, is increasingly undermined on the picket line. Here, after a few days grace, the whole weight of the oppressive and ideological mechanisms are turned on the strikers, and increasingly their supporters in support groups.

The miners strike was a text book case of this shift in consciousness. This theme runs through the many books written by participants, especially miners partners. Even material written by those active in the miners support groups show some form of revolutionary consciousness, plus a high degree of ingenuity regarding legal restraints.

Strikes and socialist activity

It has always been a feature of revolutionary socialism that picket lines are visited regularly and frequently. Reports were collected for the journal, like *Socialist Worker*, which is sold or given away. The object of the exercise is to get workers to see that their experience is not untypical, it is the reality, and a reality that extends to everyone. This generalisation of consciousness is often achieved and people often remark that they learnt more in a few days on strike than in years of paying union subs.

Socialist members

By the 1980's we had many comrades who were union reps themselves anyway and we were able to work effectively. Unlike the CP who traditionally did not politicise the issues, we always tried to generalise. Of course this was not effective with 95% of workers but with some it struck a chord. These people became members, or contacts, or paper buyers. The end result was the growth of the SWP for at least a decade, while the CP declined substantially before its final collapse.

Personal visits

A key feature of political industrial work with strong political implications is contact visiting. This can take the form of home visits, where it is usual to go in pairs for the sake of continuity, or workplace visits. Someone from the SWP can go as a "delegate" from the trades union council, or as an SWP activist. It is important to get yourself known so that when you are visiting to raise money for strikers, or taking delegations round, you are not coming in as an outsider. I have always been active doing this type of work.

Old style preparations

I had built up a dossier after 1982, plus a map, of every workplace in Enfield. I had prepared an earlier version for Tottenham IS in 1968. This later effort covered the Brimsdown and Ponder End industrial estates, Enfield Town, the factories on the Cambridge Road, Southgate town area and the many workplaces on the North Circular Road. We visited all of these and made sure they copies of any collection sheets. Of course some just threw them away but many did collections even if quite modestly. I remember collecting over £100 for the NHS workers from a furniture factory on the North Circular Road. I quickly prepared a receipt on the back of a leaflet. I did try to keep up with this pattern of systematic industrial visits, which we began to develop in the 1970's, and in particular during the miners strike, but soon found I was on my own.

The attitude of the union reps in workplaces was quite instructive. We were regarded as being people in authority whether going as trades union council reps or SWP members. They seem to regard us as union full time staff equivalents who issue out instructions on their rare visits. It did give us some status and we found collecting money for strikers, especially in the NHS achievable but not easy. Finally it did occur to me that someone should prepare national map of all workplaces in town areas to use in the next major social crisis, but events overtook this.

HTUC

From 1995, the SWP had taken control of the Haringey Trades Union Council. For the next few years, we followed a policy of assisting any strikes that occurred in the borough. Keith Flett, who was President or chair, has characterised this as the period of workers hidden protest, and documented the role of the HTUC in rendering assistance. Fuller consideration of the HTUC role will be made in a later

SWP and their own strike support groups

Finally I must record my criticism of one important aspect of the industrial policy of the SWP. As well as the attitude of separate support groups, there is the matter of the Socialist Workers' industrial reports. The closure of the R&F groups will be explored in a following chapter, and for now I want to look at the two points.

I was quite active on the Coventry Miners Support Group [MSG] and so were other comrades. I was amazed to turn up to a MSG meeting one week to find them missing. Apparently it had been decided to make all contacts with the miners direct rather than through the MSG.

I was totally mystified as to what type of thinking was behind the SWP leadership's decision to pull members out of the support groups and into direct but separate contact with miners. Our particular MSG was going well. One comrade Clive Dixon had recalled how difficult he found it to collect levy money in his car factory. The other trotskysts had been dismissive but everyone else in the meeting rallied round, including the

strong CPGB faction, and they had finished up being isolated. Yet by the decision to pull out the SWP had lost the opportunity to win majority support for our politics, a crazy decision.

Money Collections

There was some problems too over the money collected . We had been instructed by the Party to insist that the collections were to be used for extending and enforcing the strike by picketing, it was not to be used as subsistence. This was not always possible, nor even 100% desirable. Certainly, the money had not always been collected with that object in mind. When delivering cash collections in Coventry, I said that we thought the money should be used for organisational purposes, but that no doubt they would know what to do with it.

Contributions

I personally usually took my workplace collections up to the treasurer at Keresley pit in Coventry in De Compton Crescent where I had a cup of tea and a chat. It was on my way home and could be delivered right away. For the rest, I kept on the MSG until they changed meeting night, or there was something else that stopped my attendance. At this time I was commuting between Coventry and London which added to the problems

Disregarding instructions

Later in that decade when I was living in Tottenham but had been exiled to working politically in Enfield, we set up support committees for the ambulance workers as described above, and the Ford car workers. These were conventional in structure - all supporters plus some of the strikers. These were successful ventures and there was no question of the Party going it alone. Subsequently it has been Party policy to deal directly with the strikers in the years up to the end of the century but I have always worked direct wherever possible in spite of the party line, and this has been the practice of the Haringey TUC as well,

Literature

Amongst the dozens of books on the miners strike [Woodward], there is an interesting volume which describes the functioning of a support group, *Birmingham and The Miners Strike* by Paul Mackney]. The author, a Trade Union Studies teacher at the time, was Chair of the Trades Union Council and Miners Support Committee. He gives a very detailed account of the MSG work - the money collecting, busking, workplace visits, meetings and so on. Local Council leaders were Kinnockite but the comrades found ways round their passivity and police harassment. It was found that while bye laws required a license to collect money, there was no need for one to collect food. The book is an exemplary manual for future support work.

Communist Party control

The political points arising came from the attempt by the right wing TUC committee to restrict contact between miners and activists, but this was soon thwarted and the lies exposed. Mackney draws the

appropriate political conclusions from this, though he does not apply them to the Strike as a whole. The chief beneficiary was the MSG where there was an open, tolerant attitude and the linking up of other political questions. This included the question of troops in Northern Ireland, an issue the CPGB managed to squash out in many of the Yorkshire groups.

Strike reports

Coming now to the Socialist Worker industrial reports, it seems to me to be more a ghettoisation. Most of the time all the reports are crammed into the two pages inside the back cover. If there are a lot of reports, a good deal of editing goes on that is, they are simply cut to the size available.

The old *Solidarity* journal had a different approach. Reports were printed with no political editing, only repetitious details. Extra pages were just added at the end. Meanwhile in the SWV whole pages are taken up advertising Party events or with articles on some obscure aspect of Party history. This practice symbolises the subordination of workers activity to matters of the Party, just in case anyone was in doubt.

An example

One small strike in the 1990's revealed a weakness of the Party approach. I was driving up to the local Post Office for a standard visit in 1994 where the counter staff were to be out on a one day strike, when I saw a ragged picket line outside a Courage brewery in Edmonton. When the Post Office strike did not materialise, I returned to this. It was a one day strike by T&GWU members over pay, but working hours and health and safety were the real grievances. I interviewed the Senior steward who was on various national committees, a sectional steward and a R&F activist.

After a long chat, I sent in my report but the resulting article in SW was three paragraphs, the real bare necessities. All the quotes and much important material had been cut. I did drop off some copies of the paper to the workplace but there did not seem much point in following up the issue. This was an all London strike and some plants were in areas where we had branches but again nothing appeared to be done. I read in the local free paper the following year that a worker had been killed at the workplace, as the strikers had predicted. The SWP did not take up the issue or come back to me in any way. Electoral politics was taking over.

Presentation

Lastly I take a look at strikes in books and films. Most accounts of strikes are routine and of limited interest, but some, because of the nature of the strike or the approach of the author, go beyond this. So here I have listed those of momentous disputes, or unusual authors, or some point of interest.

Adalen 31 [115mm] about a massive general strike in the town of that name in Sweden after which the conservative parties went into virtual extinction

Amanita Sow Fall : *The Beggar's Strike* [1981, 235pp] ; when beggars go on strike , respectable citizens can no longer give to charity as their religion demands. What happens next ?

John Steinbeck: *In Dubious Battle* [1978, 250pp] ; the author of the classic *Gapes of Wrath* goes even more radical here with an account of farm workers strike in California in 1930s. It is very brutal.

Jeremy Brecher and Stanley Aronowitch : The US Postal strike in 1970s.in Peter Rachleff , the editor R & B ; *Root and Branch ; the rise of the workers movement* ; [1975, 544pp] . This heroic strike had many obstacles - it was opposed by the management , government , media and union full time structure , and was also illegal. Starting in New York, it spread to other cities, despite a whole battery of intimidation , pressure, and finally the US President called in 25,000 troops . These fraternised a lot but did little to get the mail moving. Finally union reps agreed to call off the action providing official action was called. A hasty deal got the posties an immediate 6% rise and another 8% later that year

Stanley Weir : *The First Recorded Strike in History* , 1170 BC [4pp] in *Singlejack Solidarity* [2004 USA, 384pp]. that year pyramid builders won an astonishing significant victory, as shown in a recovered papyrus. The same volume has a revealing story about how the US dockers used their famous 1934 win to install some workplace control: *West Coast Longshoreman and Informal Workers Control* [19pp]

Sembene Ousman; *God's Bits of Wood* [1960, 245pp] significant novel about 1947 rail workers strike in West Africa ; the author was an experienced union activist, film maker and writer . Companion volume to *Black Docker* [1978, 120pp]

Peter Wood: *The Price of a Cigar*, [1996, 230pp] a compelling reconstruction of the 1889 'dockers tanner strike' , all events are real , a miniature masterpiece for anyone's library

Joe Jacobs : *Occupation* . the clothing worker's account of the action at Warren street in July 1951, where he led 200 workers of mixed race, ages grades and genders in a spectacular resistance to vicious wage cuts . This story was first published in Kern Weller's Solidarity booklet '*A Strategy for Industry* ' and more fully in Alan Woodward's account - *After Cable Street* , *Joe Jacobs 1940-1977* [2011, 84pp] of Joe after the famous Cable Street events which he organized - centring on Joe Jacobs: *Out of the Ghetto - my youth in the East End, communism and fascism* 1913 - 39 [1978 private publication, 319 pp],

Miners Strike of 1934 in the Asturias region of Spain . Manuel Grossi : *The Asturian Uprising - fifteen days of socialist revolution* [2000, 140 pp] ; This was intended to be an uprising but the usual problems intervened . Instead it became a tragic Dress Rehearsal for 1936 revolution against fascism , a strike against a corrupt society

Rosa Luxemburg: *The Mass Strike , the Political Party and the Trade Union*, [1908 and more recently, 92 pp]. This looks at the huge waves of industrial action in Russia and East Europe at the turn of the century culminating in the 1905 general strike wave. It records the first appearance in history of the strike committees which were in fact workers councils , soon to play a key part in history . Secondly , though written by a marxist,, it validates the crucial feature of anarchist theory about the workers' capacity to organise without parties . She does her best to disguise that she is throwing over board Marx and Engels but Daniel Guerin commented that it was effectively libertarian - and he should know, being an advocate of both philosophies in his time.

'Harlan County, USA' and 'Matewan' [103 and 130mm] - two films about striking US miners faced with violence, and resisting victoriously. Info from Tom Zaniello : *Working Stiffs , Union Maids, Reds and Riffruff - an organised guide to films about labor* [1996 USA, 295pp]

Oskar Hippe: . . . *And Red is the Colour of Our Flag* [1991, 310p] ; this volume primary of political party history , nonetheless has unique accounts of strike in the huge chemical works and pits in the 1920s/30s. Hippe who was active over 60 years was imprisoned by both NAZIs and Communists and his writings seem a true experience of these years ,

Gwyne A Williams : *Proletarian Order - Antonio Gramsci, factory councils and the origins of Italian communism 1911-21* [1975, 370pp], This book is chiefly about the workplace organisation and factory occupation in Turin . It tells of the dramatic effect of four socialists who through the journal *L'Ordine Nuovo* [New Order] transformed the ship stewards committees into political bodies as the Italian crisis sharpened . The ruling class brought in fascism and Mussolini rather than lose power , as other were to do in this period. The book is written by a communist, dedicated to an anarchist.

Emma Mashinini , : *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life* [1989, 42 pages] a unique insight into the life a South African worker , shop steward and union official .

The Seattle General Strike , February 1919 by the History Committee of the General Strike Committee. Yes, a book written by a committee and it tells of the very best organisation , as the workers take over the city and region. This was a model strike , and model account, reprinted in R&B, above.

In the next volume , I include accounts of the strikes of Tottenham refuse workers, three of the posties and the important Ford Visteon occupation and strike where I was on the inside , writing an eye witness book.

This chapter has looked at strikes and the response of Support groups. Mostly it has been a tale of losses but the promotion of solidarity is essential and a key part of revolutionary activity.

Chapter Eleven Reading and Writing and Books

A look at the importance of books and writing. Books have always been very significant in my life, and writing has been a major part of my activity both at work and politically. Some key publications are looked at, as well as my own work. I begin with the bookshop episode.

When I moved out of the family household in 1981, I took up residence in North Coventry in Foleshill where I bought a shop. This area was the birthplace of Tom Mann, the socialist trade unionist. In a few months, I had converted this into a bookshop. The IS Bookshop had been closed down earlier under the new regime but I had kept what remained of the stock and ran a book service out of cardboard boxes - a common practice. In the late 1970's, the rise in book prices had already taken its toll of small book shops anyway. This also added the centralisation process which was no accident. Soon none were left, except London. I knew this process could not be reversed but I was determined to keep something going in the short term at least.

Childhood

In my childhood, I read a lot of books. When I asked my parents "How did I get here?", they gave me a book on reproduction. I believe my Grannie Woodward/Atkins actually came up with this, typically. I don't think this was a complete answer but it did show a reliance on books that could not have been anticipated. I used the Children's Library in my teens for "William" books among others, following my mother's habits in this respect. I won prizes most years for my position in class and got books which unfortunately I did not keep. Before I became politically involved I was impressed with Aldous Huxley and in particular *Brave New World*. It was many years before I discovered both his anarchist politics and his obsession with race and biology, or eugenics.

Later

It was after leaving school that I began book buying. I had little money so most of the time, second hand paperbacks were the order of the day. I progressed onto new paperbacks chiefly from the IS and SWP but it was only in my 50's that I was able to buy freely. My library has grown at an increasing rate, though there are many books I have never read. The big expansion of interesting left wing books came in the 70's and 80's, when I was short of money, and unable to buy. This meant a constant trawl around second hand bookshops and later the 'Abebooks.co' network of bookshops worldwide on the internet site, to catch up,

My bookshop

With the opening of *October Books* in Coventry, I was able to expand, getting in mainly cheap booklets.. A black political "contact" and union rep, Cyrus, who had become unemployed, did the required woodwork for the

shop The idea of the bookshop was that it would also act as some sort of political centre. It did this to a certain extent, and there were a small number of meetings there. The problems were that the prospects for revolutionary activity were declining and that the location of the shop was some way from our political activity. However it was not a total failure.

Small and cheap

I tried to keep available cheap publications that related to the aspects of the class struggle comrades and supporters were engaged in. This meant taking books from the radical bookshops distributor who came round periodically and scouring union journals and the main left newspapers. I had access to the union journals because I had tried to build up a supply of them from my college work in TUS, and there would often publicise booklets and pamphlets. The SWP and CPGB were the other main sources, with the former's bookshop, Bookmarks, as largest supplier. Most of the stock was therefore new SWP or "progressive" publications, but I did have some second hand books. I bought only books that were affordable. However attractive they were, I knew that I could not compete with the Wedge bookshop and cafe in the Coventry city centre. Even this closed after a decade or so and is now a clothes shop.

Accommodation

Because I was often at work, I had let out rooms to various comrades who I asked to open the bookshop in the mornings during the week. This was not always a success but I was there on Saturdays. Though sales were modest, people did drop in usually at the weekend. I also learned a lot about book prices during this period. I had not previously known that the shop mark-up was substantial with books being bought at 30-35% discount. This is why the book supermarkets can undercut the ordinary bookshops which used the profits to largely re-invest. Few people outside the supermarkets make a fortune from books.

I got visits from Brian Lynham, see chapter two, and Matthew Burnside, see chapter three. I moved out from Coventry in 1984, but ten years later I was still coming across my "October Books" stickers on the back of publications. Thus ended my venture into shop keeping.

A political book club

One of my main sources at October Books had been the IS Book Service, started out by Fergus Nicol from Palace Gates Road, N8, in the 1960s. Fergus had started this off with a reported £50 and would sent round a brief one page sheet, highlighting selected books. These were offered at £1 or so off the cover price. For many comrades including myself, this was the main supply of political books and they came from a relatively wide viewpoint, beyond the Party line surprisingly.

This was the days before IS publications, but there was a big expansion of left wing publications which were often cheaply priced. The books were

advertised in the IS Journal and later Socialist Review. When the shop was set up, "Bookmarks" attracted plenty of customers to the Finsbury park site. There was a display of recent publications at the front while badges and copies of papers were at the back. The shop was conventionally set out with children's books at the back and SWP stock kept on the first floor. Later, this was given up to Storage only. Second hand book were also kept sporadically in the rear.

The arrangement was that book stalls could be taken out and returned with cash for big meetings. I usually had a bookstall for my TUS courses. I got this from the Birmingham book shop in Digbeth while it lasted. This came to a sad end. Some loony crashed his car into the front of the shop and it caught fire. He was chased and captured in the Hall Green College behind the bookshop but unfortunately the body of a dead woman was found in the boot. I didn't follow the case but I think he was put away for life.

TU Books

Another initiative was the Trade Union Book Service, a facility for providing publications that union members might have difficulty in obtaining. These could again be ordered singly - from different publishers - or by bulk, using the one form. Normally it was cash up front but sometimes a sale or return arrangement was possible I believe. It came via Bookmarks. I helped to compile the brochure for a few years in the 1990s but then other people were used. I found the TUBS a real help and always gave out the brochure on my courses.

At this stage when the bookshop was providing publications from a range of publishers, I think the book service was a sort of updated Left Book Club but without the Stalinist exclusions of some Orwell. It was unique among left wing bookshops, and did survive the 80s slump, mainly due to the brilliant membership of the SWP.

Going posh

The bookshop eventually moved to central London near Tottenham Court Road tube station, though I was not alone in thinking a bigger shop in a slightly less fashionable area like Kings Cross would have been better. Every year the bookshop sent out stalls to the Marxism event where the publishers "remainders" and second hand books were a real bargain. I did transport the bookstall to the *Lutte Ouvrier* Whitsun fete near Paris for a few years in the 1980s until the practice stopped I believe, though it may have been my illness that ended it.

Pluto

Originally it was intended to make Pluto Press the in-house publisher I believe. Richard Kuper had been on the leading Party committees in the 1960s. Mike Kidron also helped. At first the experimental Workers Handbooks series - starting with the phenomenal *Hazards of Work*, was quite most successful. *Your Employers Profits* by Christopher Hird,

followed [1975, 200pp] . This was a seriously under rated book on understanding financial statements and far better than the long established Labour Research which for some reason only dealt with private companies, state capitalism again.

Three years later came *Rights at Work*, by Jeremy McMullen, a full time official in the General and Municipal Workers Union. This was a good guide to the law mainly for students and activists. In 1981 his book *Employment Law Under the Tories*, a sort of supplement to *RAW*, came out and did a reasonable job in a complicated subject. I was abit surprised at the choice of author for these books and offered my services but it must be said the two volumes were better than anticipated.

In house publications

For reasons I am unaware of, the SWP arrangement did not work out and Pluto began to specialise on more academic left wing books. As Pluto moved upmarket under Richard Kuper, the Party run 'Bookmarks' began to publish. It has produced Party literature of a wide nature. Later the policy of printing books without indexes, etc, in a cut down form, and with an expensive cover price was a bit disconcerting but in line with the new philosophy . Bookmarks is the SWP publisher, everyone understands that and it functions as such

Fund

I did subscribe £100 to the "Collective" which earned a complimentary copy of all publications at first, but later just two a year. I subscribed to a Bookmarks account, £10 a month standing order, which obtained a 10% discount. However with money getting tight on retirement, I decided to cancel this. For some years I still spent money every year at the marxism event but now get books from libertarian sources especially Housmans with the staff discount .

Radical Bookseller

An enterprise I was loosely involved with was the London Labour Library. This attempted to publicise the massive expansion in cheap left publications in the 1980s. Radical Bookseller began publication in October 1980 and was based on the bookshop at Finsbury Park, 265 Seven Sisters Road, N4, It asked for publications, and printed a brief review in a regular feature in the journal *Radical Bookseller*. This was a left wing version of the service provided in *The Bookseller* for book shops. LLL developed its own classification system, quite different to the conventional Dewey Decimal one. It kept the publications reviewed and built up a substantial Library of all known issues until it closed . I did some of the reviewing but was not involved in the administration or other work.

The LLL received a small grant from the GLC and set up an office in Highbury. However the abolition of the GLC meant financial crisis. On closure all its many donated books were given to Polytechnic of North London, now University , as befits a state orientated body. . After LLL's

decline, Einde O'Callaghan continued with a large article *Radical Books of the Month* for some years until he left for Germany in 1992. RB continued with lists of bookshops, details of book fairs ,etc, until it folded in 1992. It once published my review of literature on the Poll Tax see above. I have a virtually complete set of the RB in my library. I understand. Derek Parry now recalls that he did not buy a book for years and still has a memento in the form of one by Rosa Luxemburg.

A variation

I go now to the emergence of the political crime novel, which seems to me to be an imaginative way to learn about the essentially criminal nature of capitalism. Perhaps the earliest example of the political crime story is by the English author , William Godwin , nearly 2 centuries ago. His *Adventures of Caleb Williams* is a tale of murder and false imprisonment. It exposes the unjust nature of the English legal system. It was written to supplement Godwin's political treatise *Enquiry Concerning the Principals of Political Justice*. It is a pretty depressing tale but political message is clear. Godwin was a lifelong anarchist, with a strange but consistent theory about morality and politics. Together with his son in law , Percy Byshe Shelley, he represents a powerful aspect of dissent within British history, see *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin*. The range of books in this category is examined by Jon Lewis in his excellent anthology of radical crime fiction *Red Handed*. This volume could do with a more substantial author's introduction but is still a powerful book. The more modern era can be said to begin with *The Assassination Bureau* by Jack London,[1964 184 pp], a generally socialist writer who contributed to the cause by studies of the London poor , the rise of fascism and a book of short stories - *Revolution*. The AB book is a morality tale of "correct" killing" of right wing celebrities . The tradition is most deeply rooted in the USA. The left wing detective novel there has a strong tradition, going back to Dashiell Hammett, , with titles like *Red Harvest* [1975, 190pp]. The hero is the private detective, standing separate to the organised crimes of private enterprise and police corruption - a social pioneer in his own right, a people's champion

The Ambler contribution

Around the same period the British writer, Eric Ambler, continued this tradition with a series of volumes, of which *The Mask of Dimitrios* [1966, 220pp] is my personal favourite. In the 1970's and 80's, Pluto Press published modern versions. The level of political consciousness shown in the novels is astonishingly high. The leading person in *Uncommon Danger* is fed a Stalinist lie about Trotsky by the otherwise sympathetic Russian agency staff. He dismisses it out of hand and the Russians withdraw . The book was written in 1940. Ambler returns to the East in *Judgement on Deltchev*, a strange novel set in a repressive European State. The theme is a hero of the working class who is charged with treason in a mood that appears to look both backward at the 1950's and forward to the 1990's.

The book was of course published in 1951 and the political element was there if only in the plot.

Modern

Contemporary volumes reach a high point with Gordon DeMarco's hard boiled but political detective Riley Kovachs. *October Heat* is an exciting, anti fascist/general strike tale [1979, 230pp]. It tells of Upton Sinclair's stand for Governor of California in 1934 on the *End Poverty in California*, or *EPIC*, ticket; *The Canvas Prison* has the McCarthy victimisation of the Hollywood Ten as its background; *Frisco Blues* features a negro mutiny in wartime Port Chicago. Riley Kovachs is accused of being "soft on Trotsky" in *Frisco Blues*. When attacked by racists, he is saved by the same CP member who explains that he is acting outside the Party, the Political Committee had decreed that "intervention was politically incorrect". Bearing in mind the strong CP activity on the race issue in the 50's, this is a little difficult to believe. *The Five Pin Stands Alone* is a tale, highly believable, of FBI involvement in the Teamsters Union and the rank and file *Teamsters For a Democratic Union*. Each of these volumes explore fictionally a reality of actually occurring events. The period of the 30's and 40's was marked by a strong "Left" element in California and Hollywood. Later the reaction set in with Senator McCarthy and then Ronald Regan. The history is told comprehensively in Larry Ceplair: *The Inquisition in Hollywood - politics and the film community, 1930 - 1960*

A major Swedish contribution

The theme of the AB is used by Maj Sjowall and Per Wahloo in *The Terrorists*. In this case the killings are carried out for Right Wing reasons, but there is the same underlying approach. Crimes are put into a social context, with poverty seen as a cause. In this and other books like *The Fire Engine That Disappeared* and *The Locked Room*, there is a strict differentiation between the police and State Security. Inspector Martin Beck and his colleagues are portrayed as realistic individuals. Some have left wing views, others are scrupulously neutral, while the State Security personnel are more conventionally conservative.

The authors were both strongly committed to the Swedish Communists Party. It - and they - believed that western society was degenerate and becoming more so. Hence the underlying theme of the series of books. As we know the degeneration has proceeded apace, accelerating in the age of Thatcher and Regan's new capitalism of free markets and regulation by big business and financial institutions. No relief however has come from the East - the Russian sector disintegrated and the Chinese communists have become the most rapacious capitalists for a century or so [Mouvement Communiste] While the State violence of China may one day produces its own retribution we are stuck watching this astonishing transformation. Political crime continues regardless. Wahloo and Sjowall

wrote ten books . These have been used as a model for later writers like Henning Mankell with the 'Wallander' novels and have been republished with elaborate introductory material , most recently in 2009.

Black contributor

There is one unconventional reversal of roles which deserves mention. Chester Himes , a black prisoner turned writer , has two policemen as heroes instead of villains. His books, like *Cotton Comes to Harlem* , *The Real Cool Killers* and *The Crazy Kill* are about Harlem and deal with the problems of being black in the USA. He gets into this review by virtue of that and because he writes about organised crime. The saga of Detectives " Coffin Ed " Johnson and " Gravedigger " Jones continues beyond the death of Chester Himes in 1984. A follow-up book, cleverly incorporating Himes death has been published. You can hardly see the join in *Coffin & Co [Simon]*.

In earlier time Himes had written serious volumes of union organisation and institutionalised racism, *Lonely Crusade*, before his fiction output. Another writer with a definite social perspective is Walter Mosely : *White Butterfly* [1992, 292] .

Other volumes of interest are Sara Paretsky's books, like *Blacklist* [2003, 556pp] - tamer versions of this type - and Ken Worpel: *Dockers and Detectives* , [1983 , 125 pp] , which looks at working class reading and writing.

Another strand of literature - Dylan Thomas

For a number of years I have been intrigued by the Welsh poet. I only discovered later that he had a kind of left wing period , which extended to support for the Spanish revolution via Ethel Mannin. When I was on holiday at Ferry bank one year with granddaughter Rosa , Ally and my son Peter, I made a point of going to the boathouse at Laugharne, which bored the girls but I found exiting .

I have read *Under Milk Wood* , got the record , seen the performances and probably know it by heart. Some of his poetry affected me strongly especially the death of his father. I re-structured the order of the verses of 'And death shall have no dominion' and displayed it in my study. The Dylan Thomas Omnibus always seem to have something new each time I pick it up. [Thomas]

Hunter gatherer human groups

I have forgotten exactly why and how I became interested in early human history , but I was soon into the story of the excavations in Turkana. Books by Richard Leakey, Donald Johanson , and the curious theory of Elaine Morgan on the aquatic human origins took my attention and I periodically return to the subject.

A big library

I have a big collection of books and one of my projects for the future is to collect 10 books from everyone I know in order to build a massive Socialist

Library. The existing Marx Memorial Library is a Stalinist museum, unselective and may well be un-reformable, hence my project.

Reading for writing

If I am reading for a specific purpose, I read up sections from the Index. Sometimes I read up one or two subjects to get the authors "line". The best for this are "workers councils", the "General Strike", or the "Luddites", though others depend on the subject. You can get a pretty good idea of the author's views and general approach in this way. I think many younger comrades are not systematic enough in their reading, though of course it is the fault of the SWP that no guidance is given in this field. Years ago, we had to be critical and selective, and think for ourselves - still a recommended approach

Writing

I discovered at an early stage that reading around a subject was a sensible method of approach. Because the direction that authors were coming from was often Stalinist, Labour or academic, I would read several books on a subject. I usually annotate in pencil along the appropriate margin, and frequently mark out words or paragraphs. This is either to highlight some especially interesting information, or to comment on the wisdom being offered. Later in life, I would write general conclusions, other books to read, and so on, inside the back cover. I have always found my annotations very informative when consulting a book later

Own work

Coming now to my actual writings, there is a vast number of unpublished or forgotten leaflets, documents and so on. Among miscellaneous writings, apart from contributions to *Tenants Voice*, *Haringey Herald*, *Labour Worker* and such like, are the odd book review for *International Socialism*, many articles on H&S at work for use at work, a guide to meeting procedure, a review of a booklet on living standards 1936 to 68 by Norman Atkinson, a short pamphlet on *Laundries for the People*, a booklet on democracy and unions, and a booklet on the GEC factory in Coventry, *Workers Fight Back*. Also

There is also a pack of letters to *The Guardian* and local papers, articles for *Hazards at Work*, *Socialist Current* and *Impact*, a CND local news bulletin of the 1960's. A good deal of my course material for TUS has been extensive reproduced

Red Reading

One long term plan on which I worked for 3 or 4 years on and off was a political education scheme. This arose out of an educational programme planned by Nora in Enfield SWP in 1988. It was not as bad as some programmes which tried to cover Lenin's *State and Revolution* in two hours and next week dealt with Luxembourg's *Mass Strike* in the same time span. These were however quite academic, and crushed the learning period into

one session. They did use group discussion methods but these type of sessions were patently unsatisfactory, which I knew from the experience of new [and ex] comrades. Nora said she could think of no other approach, could anyone else ?

I thought about this and concluded the essence of an educational scheme would be -

- [1] that there was some non technical explanation of the theme ,
- 2] this would be available beforehand,
- [3] each main subject area would be covered at least twice preferably three times to allow re-consideration and re-reading,
- [4] discussion would be in small informal groups preferably at someone's house,
- [5] the programme should be wide enough and flexible enough to meet members perceived needs,
- [6] the programme would be self regulating, and could be added to as a result of experience.

Education de-valued

The problem was that from an earlier period , all forms of activity not directly relating to recruiting members to the SWP was thrown out. Educationals were not part of the agenda. The "E" word became a heresy in a frantic voluntarist binge that lasted for years and became part of the tradition. Nonetheless, I began preparing materials by surveying available books and writing up summaries. It occurred to me that such surveys, basically of non revolutionary literature, also served a political purpose. It accounted for capitalist ideology and prepared the way for a revolutionary text, usually the subject of the session.

I prepared material on Serge's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* [post Russian revolutionary experience], John Reed's *Ten Days that shook the World* [the Russian revolution], Harry McShane's *No Mean Fighter* [the history of the CPGB], and so on. Eventually there were 15 or so completed. I still have sections to write on some topics. The whole experience was certainly educational for me, though it remains entirely untried as a practical activity.

Format

Each section was between 10 and 20 pages, though Luxembourg's *Mass Strike*, which incorporated reviews of 50 publications on the Miners strike of '84-85, was longer. I passed out draft copies, though only Ian Birchall replied with some detailed comments.

Whether there was any connection or not is not clear, but at about this time the IS journal began running its series *Book watch*. This was a more theoretical version of my efforts, intended to be chiefly omnibus book reviews but with a stronger emphasis of the theoretical "line". In practice they have been very useful, though reflecting completely conventional views, with the accompanying strengths and weaknesses

Longer publications

I had never written a book for commercial style publication, though much of my material for TUS has been extensively reproduced. . With word processors, the possibilities of reproduction have increased enormously. I was able to use them extensively at work where alterations are frequently required, and for leaflets and documents. Other projects are now possible - this autobiography, etc. Other schemes remain largely in my head , an anthology of CPGB writings, with the Stalinism cut out for example.

Local labour history

One of my first ventures into full length writing was workers history volumes for the Haringey Trades Union Council, . These were *Fragments* - which published three volumes in 1999, 2000 and 2001. A fourth volume became a booklet by HTUC members Pauline Bradley and Chris Knight, after the latter commandeered my original draft - *A New World is Possible* . HTUC 'President' Keith Flett published off this own bat , a booklet on the anti racist demonstration in Haringey what would have been volume 5.

From CPGB to SWP

The SWP took over HTUC in 1993 and for several years I published a monthly newsletter *Haringey Herald*. Soon I was not only publisher but sole correspondent, editor and chief bottle washer as the more loyal comrades organised for the long awaited revolution tomorrow. I had disregarded the Party instructions over the non-possibility of mass action over the poll tax in 1990, so I felt no problem over compiling the *Fragments* volumes, though these overflow into the second period of my autobiography.

Contents

Volume 1 contained several very informative pieces on local workers history with perhaps the best being from the tube drivers union. John Robson who was the leader of the unofficial tube workers strike in 1988. There was also one on the London Furniture Shop Stewards & Workers committee. Photos were by my daughter in law - effectively, Kate - and feature an excellent one of Bill Neary , the old Chair of HTUC,

Volume 2 was unusual in that it contained two accounts of the 1997 Amaouti bakery workers strike, one by me and one by an member of the Haringey Solidarity Group which some thought as being 'anarchist ' after Dave Morris and Helen Steel's action against MacDonald's.

Volume 3 continued with accounts of union banners discovered in the local Bruce Castle Museum - photos by Peter Woodward - and paragraphs remembering Ross Pritchard, a popular print worker.

Production

Editing ,and layout was by myself at first but Derek Parry later came in. I used graphics by Clifford Harper who was happy about this as long as acknowledged. The *Fragments* books were only printed in batches of 100,

unlike Pauline's volume, in local photocopying shops, and a few are still around. I found the project very constructive.

Later

In the years beyond the period of this first volume, I have researched and written volumes on the betrayal of leninism and others giving more information of workers councils around the world. I have compiled a book for the 60th anniversary of the NHS; a short history of the international history of the shop stewards movement [as a prelude for councils] and two booklets on active libertarians Joe Thomas and Joe Jacobs

Shorter articles have found their way into *Freedom* and the *Black Flag*, and bulletins of the Radical History Network of N E London , now Haringey, or RaHH. I have also worked as a volunteer at Housman's book shop for some years doing one day a week

Reading and writing have been an important part of my life both politically and occupationally. While my record of events is far from complete, it has helped the writing of this book. The file of my writings is quite large but very mixed. I have supplemented my extensive experience by a wide programme of reading and this is an on going process. I have a large library of books, journals and some videos.

Chapter Twelve Personal, Lifestyle, Family, Friends and so on

This chapter looks at personal details such as marriage, children, housing, health, holidays, and so on. It covers a time span after chapter 1, 1960's to 1990's.

I had married Maureen in 1961 and our children David and Peter had been born in 1962 and 64 respectively. For those who believe birth weight determines lifelong health, these were 6 lbs 4 ozs and 8lbs 3 ozs. We had initially lived in Islington, then moved to Tottenham. Maureen had worked part time while we were in Islington, for the pop group manager Joe Meek in the Holloway Road. She dropped off David with a comrade, Mary, at lunch time and I picked him up after work. Mary had been one of the activists around whom the IS youth paper *Rebel* was launched. Subsequently she had become child centred, extremely good with infants, and the child minding arrangements worked well. Mary has been a life long activist and also does valuable work translating socialist documents from German.

In Tottenham, Maureen was again anxious to get out to get out to work, and secondly to earn money. Mrs Gibson, the local Labour Party person, knew about a local school where they needed a secretary. Maureen got the job and before long was teaching unqualified, and performing very effectively. Our kids were looked after by Mrs Coad, whose son Rod was in the IS and LP. Later they went to Lansdowne Road Nursery, and Down Lane Junior School. Maureen took a teaching course, got qualified and went to the newly opened Northumberland Park Community School, still at the Tottenham green site, later moved to a modern building behind the Spurs ground.

Children, the positive approach

My attitude to the kids was to regard their upbringing as a chance to do something creative. It did mean that my very active political career was to a certain extent restrained, though I did not find this a great loss. In any case I was able to function as one of the local anchor men, with Ian Birchall providing most of the ideas. Because we were the first to have children, not only in either family, but also among the Party comrades, we did get a lot of help with baby sitting. Laurie Flynn for example went to USSR and brought them back a set of those wooden dolls which sit inside the next size up, and Ian Birchall was a regular baby-sitter.

Fatherhood duties

Although my own experience had not been one with a strong paternal influence, I did feel that my own views should in practice mean that I played a large role in child care. It is true that I spent too much time at meetings but I do not think I went ahead regardless of the consequences. I probably

did not do anything like a fair share of workplace chores, certainly nothing like the system that exists in many households from the 1990's. I think that my own attitude, which could be the subject of criticism today, was well in advance at the time. I was constantly concerned to ensure that my children were brought up in a way consistent with socialism.

To this end, I spent a lot of time with the boys. I've always preferred children's curiosity and honesty to the routinised nature of most adults' behaviour, anyway. I would always answer a child's question even if this meant stopping talking to an adult, an attitude that struck some of the friends as odd.

At one stage we had a routine arrangement. I took Dave and Pete down to the local Library and then off to the swimming pool in Edmonton every Saturday. Pete and Dave duly got their life saving awards, plus, I hope, a habit of reading.

The Maguire's

One of the library staff was Maureen Maguire, with whom I would discuss Irish politics. We did see her and her husband Chris, socially and there were fraternal relations all round. Many years later I was to come into contact with their daughter Oona Kelly over anti privatisation work. Oona was a school governor and active in the fight to stop educational privatisation.

Subsequently I was to prepare a Socialist Walk around South Tottenham and Oona was already organising general walks in North London so I discussed the plans. On the day in April 2001, she duly came for the walk and bought her Dad, who seemed to know a lot about Tottenham and socialism and the IS group in Tottenham some 30 years ago. This was indeed the very same Chris Maguire. He became active in our Radical History group for a while, exercising a strong sense of humour. Oona's mum had returned to Dublin, her sister was a writer and she was keeping the family traditions going. Socialist activists inhabit a small world.

Tottenham

We lived at the time in a standard terraced house in Seymour Avenue with a small concrete garden. I did small repairs, etc., myself, both as a means to save money and because it seemed easier to do. I was doubtful about employing people to do things, though I had to have builders in to install a big oil fuelled heater and to build a larger bathroom. Apart from these examples, doing it myself seemed a positive way to create the surrounding environment, though my father had not been very active in this direction. As soon as we had moved into Seymour Avenue, the lodger had been Jim Cronin, a comrade from Islington. He had subsequently moved out on marriage and Chris Hill came next came next. Chris was to go to prison on a trumped up charge. Over the years I have had numerous comrades as lodgers as I outline below.

Lifestyle - Going away

Holidays had to be cheap ones, often with other group of parents. We did go on camping trips, the most memorable being up to Scotland during the World Cup in 1966. Mel and Gerry had gone up the week before and reported good weather. When the rest of us arrived, the rain started. There was Maureen and I plus kids, Jim and Liz, Alan Watts and Diane. It rained every day. We went into Aviemore to see the quarter and semi finals but after another torrential soaking, decided to travel back on the Saturday - and missed the final. It was some years before I saw the West Ham trio of Geoff Hurst, Bobby Moore and Martin Peters play their winning game.

Canal

Another venture I engaged upon was the boat. Ted W from the Wood Green LP and tenants campaign, had acquired an old lifeboat which he kept up the Lee Navigation Canal at Hoddesdon. We brought it down to Tottenham one new years day and proceeded with the repairs. Eventually he and I had a disagreement and I was left with the vessel. The engine was always giving trouble so I took it out and put an outboard on an A frame. I was indebted to Dave Turner, a comrade who had some marine engineering knowledge, for all this work. We would take regular trips up the canal. Chris Hobbs, husband of the campaigning night cleaner May Hobbs, sometimes came on these.

One year, we had a holiday on the boat. Dave, Pete and I went into London and moored in Victoria Park. Maureen joined us and we slowly travelled through London, past the City Basin and out to the main Grand Union Canal. We went out to the West and up, and then branched off down the Slough Arm. Water levels were low and we got stuck in the mud several times. Peter cut his foot which turned septic so I took him to a doctor. We turned back and next went down the Aylesbury Arm to the town. It was astonishing to come back out to the traffic again, everything was so peaceful on the canal. We returned home after that. Pete and Dave were finding all the lock winding quite hard work, which it was. Still it was a holiday with a difference.

Annually

We used to have collective holidays most years in Swanage. Mel had some contact with the CP and booked a sea front house belonging I believe to Wilf, Page, a long serving agricultural workers union activist. For the fortnight, we would all troop off and having a room to each family, engage in the usual holiday activities - a day on the beach, or watching the rain, etc. Most of the Tottenham comrades went, and their families too, Mel and Gerry, Maureen and I, Jim and Liz, Ted and Doreen. The kids got one ice cream a day and Dave, as the oldest, supervised the distribution. Mel and Gerry liked Swanage so much that they eventually bought a house

there and moved down, along with Chris and Jenny and children, and several others

For holidays in general, I have always gone camping. This was sometimes a bit of a trial in the early days, though the kids seem to like it. I have camped in Yugoslavia, Italy, Spain, East and West Germany, Austria, and most regularly in France. For many of these trips, I have had a camping van, always useful when the weather gets bad. In this country, I have most often gone hill walking in North Wales, to Shell Island or Beddgelert village, with the 'dog'. With modern equipment, and the growing provision of meals on camp sites, the very small inconvenience of having to put up the tent is more than outweighed by the freedom of movement and cheapness. As with housing, I have always tried to organise collectively and many subsequent holidays have been of this nature.

I did go, with Maureen, Ray S and Viv, to the Du Letty campsite in Benodet in Brittany quite regularly for many years, as mentioned elsewhere. By the 1990's, numbers had thinned out and it was becoming increasingly difficult.

Collective

On housing again, I have frequently proposed some form of "collective" from the 1960's to the 1990's but this has only once been taken up, when I did it myself. When we moved back from Coventry in the 1980's, in varying stages, I decided to buy a house in Tottenham, with Pete and Dave with Breda, as "lodgers". For some years thereafter I had a succession of lodgers, mainly comrades, until 1990's. When eventually the last one moved out I was faced with living on my own. I viewed this with some apprehension at first but found it quite liberating. I don't think I had realised the restrictions involved in house sharing. Later of course I returned to house sharing, see volume two.

Dogs

I have usually kept a dog, right from the age of 5 or so. There was Scruffy, Suki, Barney, Dancing Williams (lost his step in Nantucket!), Spice and others I can't name. I have always found a dog to be a natural associate, and think I always will.

Split Relationship

However back to the narrative - time was running out for the Tottenham days in the 1970's. I was finding it difficult to get work consistently and Maureen was working. As is so often the way with married women in their 30's, she was feeling increasingly independent and began to have some sort of relationship with a fellow teacher, who had once been in the IS. Terry To be fair, I had made clear that I did not regard marriage as being for life. At about this time too I was up at Warwick University doing my MA. This was a trying time and I responded by having a very modest

relationship with a woman who had also been on the Enfield Poly course with me, Helen.

The Midlands

The situation was resolved, at least partly, when both Maureen and I got work in Coventry and Solihull respectively. We moved up to Coventry, into a big old house in prosperous Earlsdon suburb, the kids went to the local comprehensive and something like status quo was established.

In Coventry, after a few months settling in and household arrangements, I quickly became very active in the IS. Maureen became immersed in her school work. There were the usual groups for social life, though because my job was in Birmingham, this was a separate world. While I was remaining in the thick of political action, Maureen was drifting out into her chosen career. The tensions began to rise once more.

Growing up

In 1980, I had taken Dave down to London to get work and he began a job in computing. After school, he had started an "A" level course, dropped out and gone on to do 6 months on the Youth Training Scheme, re-winding electric motors. As ever flexible, he had found this acceptable but we insisted he get better qualified than "O" levels. One feature of Dave and the "O" levels is interesting in itself. After a path breaking holiday in Yugoslavia at Zadar in Croatia, we had rented a villa with Janice and Paul Smith in Umbria in central Italy the following year. Dave came under some pressure from Maureen and Paul over his exams, he seemed a bit laid back. I defended him saying he would pass all or fail all, and I predicted passes. As it happened, he passed in all subjects.

One year on, he did a 12 month Computing Course at the local Technical College and when no work seemed available in Coventry, we tried London. He got work at the first agency we tried. Since then he has gone on from job to job to very well paid positions in the "City", on contract and at Canary Wharf. He married in 1987 to Breda, from the outskirts of Coventry, and 2 children followed, Francesca and Declan. Like all children, they grew up fast, of which more later. Breda worked making clothes at first but managed to get into the Security business, again quite well paid. Dave has put on a lot of weight over the years but made some small efforts to lose it.

Crisis ?

His departure from Coventry in 1980 seemed something of a watershed. After some years of rows and hassle, I decided to leave and moved out in 1981. I moved into a shop in the Foleshill area of North Coventry, but more of that later. Peter was 16 at the time and I think it was upsetting for him, but it seemed the only way. I remained on fairly good terms with Maureen, going on holidays and so on. She has lived in Coventry and Leamington Spa, and her job and friends appear to keep her happy enough. She has always had problems with money, though this seems to be correcting itself.

Beliefs

Her politics have followed a typical pattern. Her father always seemed to be around the edges of the CP, he worked at Mount Pleasant Post Office depot and was a good working class activist. She had been dragged into the IS, through the YS at the World's End in Chelsea but it had been a nominal membership. When she was at College, she went around with the Peter Sampson and Anne Marie Wolpe, both of whose families played important parts in the CP. Her career attitude was indeed in line with reformist politics.

Later in life she has been a close friend of the late Carol, estranged wife of George, for some years in the Canadian, and possibly UK, Communist Party. He became a leading academic and LP politician as head of the Low Pay Commission. Maureen is also close to Estelle Morris, Labour MP for Birmingham Yardley. She had taught at Sidney Stringer Comprehensive in central Coventry with Estelle. Her political views became somewhat contradictory but were no longer revolutionary.

No 2 son

Peter carried on with his "A" levels, and the £15 a week I gave him probably helped see him through. He started a degree course at SE London Poly but almost immediately got a job as a computer operator. He was paying a huge amount for a bed sitter and I decided to sell up in Coventry and move back to Tottenham. This was 1984, in the middle of the miners strike. I spent some time looking at houses then found one near the tube station at Seven Sisters that they seemed to like, as I did. When we moved in - Pete, myself, Dave and Breda, it took some years to put into shape. Dave and Breda moved out in 1986 into their own house.

Peter meanwhile had got together with Kate and after coming to a couple of meetings joined the SWP. He got a job with Dave at the Central London Poly and soon became the union rep for the Local Government union, NALGO. He was a conscientious and active rep, taking courses and quickly learning the role. He became very involved in the anti Poll Tax movement, too involved for the SWP who were more into "interventions" than involvement. The phone was frequently in use over that.

Disagreements

Peter has generally accepted the Party line over a number of issues and we have had many disputes over the Bosnian question for example. He does have an open mind and has managed to keep a good balance over his commitment to his family and the SWP. Pete and Kate had two children from their relationship - Rosa always seemed independent and intelligent, and Alison, who was the most content baby in the world, at first. She was later to be the greatest victim of family breakdown, from which she took many years to recover. More on this in volume 2.

Peter also has his a strong commitment to his work. From PCL, he went onto London University after doing very well in a part time post graduate

course. Subsequently he joined Independent Television News, doing computer graphics. In later life, he has been working in colleges or doing research on one topic or other. At ITN, he began a relationship with Jo Turner and later moved in with her. Isobel was born the year after in 1999.

Pete had become a cadre in the SWP, and reads widely in politics, as well as on his occupation. The phenomena of second generation party members is not common and there is nothing like the pressure that existed in the old CP to enrol family members. After the revolution there will be a law preventing children from following the same career as their parents - well, that's my proposal anyway.

Also

Kate started work in a local nursery school, then did physio-therapy in the Whittington Hospital. For some years she was been employed by the Council working with disabled people in Wood Green.

In the final years covered by this book both Dave and Peter separated from their partners. This was a distressing time for all concerned and the subsequent events must await a second volume.

Health, diet and so on

Finally in this chapter, a brief look at health. Though my family had been quite poor, the rationing system, plus malt, cod liver oil, orange juice and milk resulted in a fairly sound childhood diet, I think. I had free school meals, lots of bread and jam or sugar but usually some cereals for breakfast. We kept chickens in the back garden but I never ate eggs when they did away with the war time egg powder in the nice blue tins. I found the real thing too runny and greasy. In my childhood there was always plenty of exercise through sport - it cost no money. I did play football for my school but a nasty leg injury from frozen ground ended my District career with East Kent Boys

In adult life, I kept up the exercise and didn't smoke, so when I was discovered to have high cholesterol in my late twenties, it was a bit of a set back. I took tablets to no avail and let the thing drop. My next experience was more serious. In 1982, I developed a small lump on the side of my neck and Hodgkin's Disease was diagnosed. This is cancer of the lymph nodes but fortunately was caught at a very early stage. I had radio-therapy until eventually I couldn't swallow even liquids. They injected a blue dye between my toes and some hours later, the rest of my body was X-rayed. It seemed as if everything else was OK.

Occupational ?

As indicated earlier, I think the cause could have been benzene from a petro chemical works where I had worked in Enfield. The Birmingham H&S Advice Centre said I should sue but I stupidly thought it was all over and took no action. I found a book *Cancer - a guide for patients and their*

families by Chris and Sue Williams, very instructive, and I have lent it out and replaced it a couple of times since then, The next attack came in 1986. I was examined every 4 months at the hospital, the Coventry and Warwick in Coventry and later the North Middlesex when I moved back to London. Both missed the resurgence of HD. When I was finally CAT scanned in January 1987, the disease was in the fourth and final stage - it had spread to more than one other organ on both sides of the body. One Friday, Dr K, at the North Mid, said I would have to come in next Monday, for a laparotomy, or exploratory operation. On the Saturday I went as usual down to Wapping for the picket of the Rupert Murdoch printing works - it was the day of the police riot - but more on this elsewhere. On Monday, I went in to hospital. In the event, they discovered it was in my liver and my spleen, the latter being removed. I then had 10 months of chemotherapy.

Conventional treatment

The jockey Bob Champion had much the same experience with cancer and wrote a book about it. Chemotherapy affects people differently. In my case, all the three treatments I had were similar - day 1, injection and massive doses of pills; days 2 to 7, more pills. Day 8 another injection and pills; day 9 to 14 more pills. Days 15 to 28, recovery period - then a repeat treatment if my white blood cells had built up their numbers again. I was an out patient all the time.

I had very few side effects, just nausea on the first day for the first treatments. I was back working with the WEA after a few months in mid 1987. The operation was the most drastic but I can honestly say that I always thought I would recover, though I understand it was 50 - 50

After effects

There were some nasty moments. My immune system was damaged and I had pneumonia after a few months. I had no strength or bodily control and one day lost consciousness in the toilet. I managed to crawl back to bed and Clare, a lodger, came in from work and called the doctor. In 1990, I had shingles but one of the new super drugs, acyclovir, cured me inside a week.

Medical herbalism

One remaining problem was liver damage. I was consistently getting a high reading on a 'GT' test. The hospital tried everything, waiting for it to go away, an alcohol ban, etc. In the end I went to a medical herbalist, Andrew Chevalier who had cured the ME of a friend, Lionel. He advised me on my diet and gave me 6 months of herbal medicine.

The hospital warned me against this type of treatment but by then I was cured, having kept quiet about it at first. Herbal remedies work slowly, over a period, with little or no side effects and they treat the cause of the problem. Modern medicine works quickly with plenty of side effects and

sometimes concentrates on the manifestation of the illness. So I did learn about the value of medical herbalism, which was logical since thousands of years of development must have taught humans something, and unlike other alternative medical treatments, there is a scientific basis for its effectiveness.

Herbal medicine did work and I have since recommended it to dozens of people. The residue of human knowledge in this, as in so many other fields, remains with the people not the "experts". I have used it since and it has never failed me. I have tried to get others interested but with no success.

My doctor for treatment was very active in the herbal medical world and wrote a popular book on *Herbal First Aid*. For those wishing to read more *Green Pharmacy* by Barbara Giggs is recommended .

Generally

The other imperative was the need to look after my body. My attitude in my youth had been that arrangements for old age were superfluous as the revolution or the concentration camps would take care of those. In the event, things turned out differently. I just got older and weaker. despite some rearguard action.

I had trained up my body fitness in the 1980's and run a half marathon. This was the 'West Midlands Transport' Christmas Pudding Run in 1982 in Birmingham. Since then I had engaged periodically in jogging for a few months a year and in the 1990's, I had bought an exercise bike. This had a heart monitor and so I could check my pulse for a return to under 100 beats per minute. In January 1995, I began to seriously exercise and I bought a book "Fit, not Fat", which gave a comprehensive explanation of the value of consistent exercise. I began to do 30 minutes aerobic exercise every other day, as the author recommends for those over 55. I lost some weight and my pulse recovery rate dropped from nearly 2 minutes to about ½ minute for a return to under 100. This time I kept up the exercise for longer than a couple of months.

Weight and diet

Also in late 1994, my consultant at the North Middlesex Hospital, Dr K, had commented that my weight continued to increase, and now stood at over 96 kg. I started to look seriously at my diet, especially after my weight seemed to drop 2 kg, without my doing much to achieve this. Weight loss is a key indicator of cancer, so I took a close interest in the bathroom scales. It did stabilise but the whole episode had made me much more aware of the problem. I started to monitor my diet despite my knowledge that dieting for a period is actually counter productive. The "Fit, not Fat" book reinforced my scepticism over diets and I relied instead on regular exercise.

A trip to Andrew Chevalier, initially over slight pains in my joints, convinced me about the importance of fresh vegetables, and seeds. I had become gradually aware of the dangers from pesticides, mainly from the organo-phosphates problem. I had cut out sugar some years previously as a result of reading John Yudkin's "*Pure, White and Deadly*", and now I took to examining the labels in the supermarket. What went into beer for example? Only the German brewers specifically stated "yeast, hops, malt, barley and spring water" or whatever. Of course it didn't say "We use masses of pesticide on the hops and there's plenty still in the beer". But I was trying and became a very fussy shopper.

Incidentally, I discovered that John Yudkin who wrote *Pure, White and Deadly*, an expose of the dangers of sugar in processed foods, was victimised by the Food Industry/Government /medical authorities for his work. He was an earlier version of Richard Lacey who got similar treatment over BSE. Both did excellent work over the fundamentally unsafe nature of food in a capitalist system.

Organic

In later years, I began eating non chemical food when I could get it, just on the basis of the unknown consequences of combinations of impurities, rather than any considerations about taste. I also became a vegetarian - eating fish and some dairy produce until I eventually swapped soya for milk

Others

I have tried to influence members of my family about personal health but with much success. My sister Pat, and her then partner Graham, did express some interest. Pat was subsequently diagnosed with a tumour on her pituitary gland. This had led to years of ill health but was totally undiagnosed. She has had years of treatment for this and tells everyone about it. My son Dave was overweight but a trip to Andrew Chevalier achieved nothing. Breda had some health problems and managed to lose quite a lot of weight. Pete just ignored any advice, and while Kate was much more receptive, they both continued smoking for years. Maureen had high blood pressure and sciatica in 1995 but preferred to use orthodox medicine. I bought them all Andrew Chevaliers' "Herbal First Aid" but any clear effects from this are unknown.

Another theory

There is another dimension about health and that is the psycho somatic, the influence of the mind over the body. In my case, both cancer outbreaks came in periods of stress. In 1982, I had recently split up my marriage and in 1986, I had packed in my job and become unemployed. The general phenomena of people dying soon after their spouse, or their birthday suggests the powerful impact of the mind. In 2011, both my widow aunt Lily and her new husband died within hours of each other, admittedly she had dementia but he seemed healthy

Considering the massive general pollution of the environment with carcinogenic substances, the death rate is astonishingly low, and may be connected. Experiments have shown the role of stress in breaking down the immune system in animals, which is another pointer. The exact nature of this influence seems unclear to me but I am sure it exists.

IBS

In 1995, I experienced some occasional and minor pain in the bottom left of my abdomen. By this time I was getting increasingly frustrated over my work, rapidly declining. After some months of getting nowhere, I decided to use this to go for early retirement on health grounds. I went to my GP, a Doctor T who had replaced the highly recommended Dr White. I also reported this to my regular doctor at the North Middlesex. I had a CT scan and a specialist poked a torch-like object up my bum. Nothing could be found. My doctor diagnosed Irritable Bowel Syndrome - in other words he didn't know what it was. Strangely, Andrew Chevalier made a detailed examination of my stomach and came up with the same diagnosis.

In the event

I had time off work and eventually put in for early retirement. I was convinced that stress was a cause and once I was retired, it did ease. The pain, more a dull ache, similar to the stitch, usually occurred when I had been active in the class room, or on the word processor, and I had had this in a mild form for some years. Then after a few months, I had several attacks of stomach cramp. I always keep a supply of penicillin as my spleen had been removed and in desperation, I took this and some of the tablets I had been prescribed. The new attack did ease after a few weeks but I decided to get a new doctor. I never did in fact. Meanwhile the disorder continued.

When I was off sick from work, I had a certificate from my doctor and after my retirement was put in for disability benefit. I had after all paid in my contributions for several decades and felt it was an entitlement, especially in view of my modest pension. However such is the cheating nature of government that this was soon stopped as indeed so are many benefits. While the government runs advertising campaign about "social security cheats", its own record over welfare rights is the worst example of immoral action. No wonder the reply of most people is total rejection.

The family

The folk in Broadstairs have continued as usual. My sister's marriage eventually broke up and her children both establish led relationships and household in Tunbridge, though these proved to be troubled. My brother Brian continued to work at Margate hospital, moving from manual worker portering into the office. His partner Jackie has kept house and the two girls both work in the NHS, in various capacities.

There are family re-reunions at my sisters for her birthday in July and we see my cousins , David, Sheila , Pam, etc After my mum died the Xmas family reunion seemed to peter out but recently Christmas reunions have begun again at David's place in Uppminster.

I am hoping this volume will revive some of the family interests and even further research into the past./

This chapter has looked at several aspects of my personal life that are not covered elsewhere. It also tells of my immediate family and related issues. The later years are recorded in volume 2 .

Chapter Thirteen

From marxist-leninism to socialist libertarians ; summary of SWP mistakes ; some additional notes, my fault ; introduction to the subject

By now we have reached the 1990s and I was re-considering my political philosophy . A number of criticisms have been recorded briefly in previous chapters , now I was starting to put ideas and responses into a consistent perspective.

In chapters 2,3,4 , 5 & 6 especially, I record my experience and responses ,and there is no need to repeat this here, A summary - I was active in areas like South Paddington , Islington Tottenham and Coventry in political work around the IS group, and suchlike , but especially around promoting industrial action and generalising it. I had gradually got more distant from the Party centre of things . By say 1979, I was recording my dissent while concentrating on union education work.

Over the years my recognition of the specific mistakes was leading to a general re-assessment of marxism as a political philosophy. I had completed this well before the turn of the century and this chapter ends with a brief statement of what I describe as socialist

This whole section comprises hindsight, as like many others I had no thorough knowledge of what was going on, or its significance . It was only looking back , or reading up subsequently from published documents that the full story emerged. Mostly we only knew about the next meeting or the last one within a limited strategy , only those with a definite, if initially hidden, agenda that were aware the unfolding story of events as a whole . Still hindsight is better than continuing blindness

This personal account is not a history , and comprises :the points outlined above . I have identified four large errors which led me to question both the SWP and marxist/leninism -

- ❑ the decision to impose a revolutionary party format ;
- ❑ abandoning the industrial groups and journals , plus auxiliary journals - just before the miners strike, too ;
- ❑ abandoning ideas of mass resistance to the poll tax in favour of union structure led resistance,
- ❑ a comment on democracy in the organisation expressed by the obsessional resistance to Lionel Sims's ideas on historical origins of feminism

repeat - the following paragraphs are largely anecdotal not historical.

Other factors were publications which called into question any residual revolutionary spirit, in contrast to the group I had joined thirty years previously,

I also include some points about my own faults over the years covered . I have clearly been at fault for my inactivity over involvement in the big picture , so I have penned some paragraphs on the subject.

Mistake number one,

The imposition of the SWP.

There is ample evidence of the consequences of the scrapping of the existing political structures and the replacement by the true 'leninists' revolutionary party. This is in earlier pages of this book and many other sources [International Socialists org] Here I will mention some less known pieces of evidence, starting with a publication from the pre *IS, Socialist Review* period .

The 'Rosa Luxemburg' issue, 1958

Tony Cliff had written a brilliant short book on the marxist activist, and in the original edition in had praised her contribution, as opposed to that of bolshevik Lenin. This has a validity all of its own and the book remains by far the best publication on the life of the Polish socialist who was murdered by the German Labour Party in 1919. Many people describe themselves as Luxemburgists and her books are reprinted in a constant stream even in this century .

But events in the very early years took a curious turn. Mysteriously in the 1969 and subsequent reprints , the book was crudely amended - a visible 'cut and paste' job - to reverse the judgement. I personally suspect Jim Nicol who single handedly was executing Cliff's directives . Jim , who went on to a well publicised but deserved career as a defence lawyer, made the biggest single contribution to establishment the IS as an effective coherent organisation , despite its leninism. The text change referred to was denied for years, and leaders like Duncan Halls offered no explanation but eventually it was acknowledged by Ian Birchall in the official book of the Cliff's Writings [2000]

Russia as state capitalist

This theory had been advanced by the anarchist writer G P Maximoff in the early 1920's and was widely publicised by the same author in the USA in the next decade [Maximoff] It is one of the great propaganda myths of the age that Cliff was the first to propose the theory. In 1955, Cliff had written and published his volume on the nature of stalinist Russia This misrepresentation deserves to re be refuted as often as the SWP repeat it.

In addition, British anarchists had published in 1944, a book by Marie Louise Berneri, *Workers in Stalinist Russia*. While Cliff in his later publication was almost exclusively concerned with marxist theory, as the chapter headings confirm, Ms Berneri concentrates on everyday issue like work, housing, role of unions and suchlike. In addition, her references are current books, not the academic Russian text books of Cliff. It is still readable and indeed in circulation today. Clearly there is no case for plagiarism, it is just that the libertarians got there first.

For those unfamiliar with the Berneri family, the father had been murdered by the Communists in Spain in 1937, for siding with the workers. Miss M L Berneri died tragically in childbirth in 1949 aged 31, leaving her partner Vernon Richards to continue alone.

The Kidron contribution

One other neglected publication deserves mention, In 1968, Michael Kidron, a founder members of the IS had written a study of *Capitalism since the War* and this came out as a paperback Pelican two years later. It is well written book which explains his analysis, including the permanent arms economy as a temporary solution to the market system's instability. This was perhaps the second point in IS policy and contrasted with orthodox trotskyist prediction of permanent, instant economic collapse, and those simpletons who alleged capitalism had solved its problems, that is, all those holding orthodox opinions. The third cardinal point concerns the nature of leadership of the Labour Party and trade unions - which were characterised as thoroughly moderate and collaborationist. Again this was an adoption of a long held libertarian policy and re-states the basic revolutionary position.

Kidron also relates the shift away from national pay negotiating towards the union representatives in the workplace. This give priority to shop stewards and their bodies like the joint committees - a main aspect of syndicalist theory and another example for our collection. Tony Cliff was to published three books on the workplace struggle from 1966 to 1975. which we have looked at previously but Kidron who tragically died in 2002 probable made the biggest single theoretical contribution on the subject

A *Socialist Review* times 2

One last publication should be examined as well. In 1965 there was a volume published entitled 'A Socialist Review'. This is of interest especially as there was a volume with exactly the same name published by the now SWP in 1998. The contents of each can be compared instructively at length by other writers but for our purposes we can simply compare the status of the two lists of contributors. Edition 1 has 58 writers

, of whom 21 are not IS members. There was a debate over economic planning, featuring Eric Heffer, John Hughes and Ken Alexander; two contributions on nationalisation and Labour which seem included in order that they can be knocked down; there is only one contributor who was an IS full timer, the irrepressible Tony Cliff who wrote under his own name and several pen names; the introduction was by the formidable Jim Higgins.

Edition two has 59 contributions; none are from non members, and an estimated 28 are from SWP full timers including the introduction and editing, with Cliff, Alex Callinicos, Chris Harman and Lindsey German predominating. Content wise, Jim S is preferred to the Solidarity-for-workers-power version of the Great Flint Sit In, a definitely inferior choice, but this is 50% of the industrial subjects. The outstanding feature is the way the full timers dominate the volume - a move away from libertarianism to be sure towards the vision of the party run by full time marxist officials.

Mistake number two

Perhaps the most influential event was the decision to close down various journals in which Party members worked with non Party activists in fields reflecting aspects of the class struggle. These were fighting discrimination against women and ethnic minorities, and most crucially the rank and file newspapers established in the big industrial struggles of the previous decade. It will be recalled that the IS had built up a small industrial base and, through well attended Conferences, formally set up the National Rank and File Organising Committee in 1974. This did not long survive the alliance of Left union leaders and Labour Government but had produced the Right To Work campaign. There was a big growth of R&F newspapers at this time as outlined previously.

Now the decision of the Central Committee was that Rank and File newspapers would be closed, effectively ending the existence of the Groups themselves. My own minimal contribution to the *Tech Teacher* had been acknowledged, but I can not recall even attending meetings, though I believe Terry Mandrell, a long standing IS member, was the Birmingham secretary.

A document by Alex Callinicos was printed in ISJ 2;17, and separately, which was intended as political underpinning for this decision. *The Rank and File Movement Today* is chiefly a historical survey and far better than his later disastrous *Socialists in Trade Unions*. The first 30 pages are a standard Leninist account of the R&F movements from WW1 to the NR&FOC, excluding the pre war Unofficial Miners Reform Movement. Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein cover this and contrast it to the independent SS&WCM of WW1 in their book on *Marxism and the Trade*

Union Struggle - the General Strike of 1926. [19876, 320pp] I have no disagreement with this point.

Callinicos then correctly criticises Richard Hyman's argument that the self evident bureaucratisation of the R&F stewards rules out any current revolutionary strategy. This was the result of deliberate co-option of stewards, the promotion of full time senior stewards and the "education" process. Hyman's argument presumes that defending working class interests is exclusively reformist, a pessimistic perspective but not too distant from the SWP. Callinicos then proceeds to effectively accept Hyman's conclusions by a series of fallacious points that justify the CC's closure decision.

His 'evidence'

He charts the decline of the R&F journals, which is evident but does so in a curious way. He gives the latest print order for a remaining six journals but admits that the figures may be exceptional as they cover the Xmas period. Less eminent people in such circumstances use a device called the average, but this is clearly beyond the author. He further points out that the survivors are mainly white collar, which appears to discount the rise of white collar unionism in the last decade, and indeed since that time.

He then criticises the ex IS Industrial Organiser Steve Jeffreys, who by then had fallen from favour and later resigned to avoid expulsion. He was making the basic point that R&F groups should comprise revolutionary Party members and union militants. This apparently is "confused thinking".

He quotes at length from a person apparently outside any stated union membership or experience or other identification. This "Lindsey Greig" states, in an unpublished document, that R&F groups mainly represent long standing members whose meetings become a place for that well known phenomena "tired socialists of questionable hue". For this read, ex- or non-members or dissidents, and these words were to become very familiar over the years. A further point is that the groups are sometimes dominated by sectional interests.

Well, "Lindsey Greig", should he or she exist, is entitled to their opinion, and it is probably true that sectionalism does exist along with many other defects inside the Party and its organisations. It seems to me that the CC could have had little faith in the political beliefs of the members who were apparently unable to resist such obvious and predictable tendencies. If the R&F groups are also weak, would it not also be better to stay in them and build them up, not jack in the whole show and leave comrades isolated.

Firefighter dispute

Callinicos gives the example of the intervention in the "debacle of the firefighters strike " which will come as news to many of the FBU comrades and active Party members. Even if this was seen as a debacle, the fault lies in the technique of the intervention instead of consistent work. It has to be admitted that the treachery of the Labour government and TU leaders may have been sufficient to overcome opposition, anyway.

He has to admit that the *Defend Our Unions* Conference of June 1979 did attract widespread support and 1,100 delegates. He says this was only based on a defence against Labour and Tory attacks which sounds like a pretty good basis for R&F action to me.

The simple fact is that the Party was primarily concerned to defend its own structure and membership, a fact admitted by CC members in various meetings. The structure had to be consolidated apparently. It seems to me that the primary role of a revolutionary socialist party is to build up the base of working class opposition when it is weak. The role of the party member is to carry out this primary function rather than fight strongly to stop any loss to 'party' membership, however small.

Back now to the 1982 decision to close down other non Party journals, not directly connected to the workplace such as the anti-racist *Chingari* and *Flame*, and *Women's Voice*. I felt that these though serious, did not represent so serious a breach as the industrial matters .

Industrial perspectives again

Another strong point of disagreement arose from a short book *Socialism in the Trade Unions* by Alex Callinicos which was published by Bookmarks in 1995. I'm afraid this had all the signs of a rushed job for the coming Manchester TU Conference but became equally rushed off into obscurity. It is deservedly unsold and still lurks on the bookshelves many years later.

My criticism is of the title, language, layout, proof reading, author, and most crucially the content. The title, *Socialism in the Trade Unions*, is quite misleading. *Socialism* is only briefly mentioned in the text, but more of that later. The *Trade Unions* part is surely misconceived. Rather than trying to make trade unions socialist, we should be seeking to get workers into self activity in the workplace . Official national unions, as experience and history show, are the last and most vigorous defenders of capitalism. The concern of revolutionaries is to persuade workers to go into action in factories, offices, hospitals, school and so on. In fact the booklet does concentrate on the workplace, despite the title.

The language used is academic and abstract. Mention is made of society being a "liberal democracy". What the hell is a "liberal democracy" ? People with a degree in Politics may recall that it is an expression used to describe the political structure of advanced industrial society. A good number of readers may think it's something to do with a political party and nothing to do with them. There are a number of expressions used to describe our society which of course has very little to do with "democracy". I personally prefer to say "parliamentary representation".

We also read about the "Great War". There was nothing "great" about the 4 years of killing and maiming from 1914 to 1918. Even non political writers generally use the more politically neutral term of "World War One" (WW1). Lastly there is the "prosecution of the strike". I know about all sorts of things that people do in a dispute but "prosecuting" sounds more like something the Solicitor General does from his cupboard in Whitehall. Why not stick to plain English ?

The layout and proof reading are other poor features. The two tables on *Rank & File Organisations* and *Strikes this Century* are rendered totally incomprehensible because the column headings have either been entirely cut out or are mis-titled. Additionally, nobody has bothered to prepare an Index to assist readers in selective use. The footnotes or references at the back to help people who want to follow up issues by further reading are mis-numbered and have references to omnibus editions of an author instead of specific articles - as if everyone has the expensive and massive collected works of authors available on their bookshelf.

Eleven pages are used for "Useful Addresses", including a complete list of national unions. The text quite correctly points out that national unions have a set of priorities different to the members, so why refer us to them ? It would have been better to reprint the list of local Trade Union Councils as the *New Statesman* had done in 1994, or the remaining union support groups that act as centres of co-ordination and information. A list of Trade Union Studies Centres in local colleges could have been helpful..

Among the other "Useful Addresses" are the employer funded British Safety Council, while the strongly union based London Hazards Centre is missed out. While the Labour Research Department is listed, it should be noted that this body has moved away from the moderately left wing/Communist Party (CP) position it once held. Predictably another omission include that of the valuable service workers advisory project SWAAP. At least the Construction workers Safety Campaign is included.

All of this prompts the question as to why this particular author was chosen. Alex Callinicos has not been a leading union comrade and clearly knows little about union activity. He may have a grasp of political theory but getting him to write a booklet on unions is like a person with a knowledge of trees and architecture doing the job of a carpenter on a house building site. What is more disconcerting than the poor choice of author is the list of 'eminent' persons who presumably assisted him.

On to the content - which again show more weaknesses than strengths. The book is at its strongest when it deals with the historical elements. There is a useful summary of the development and role of shop stewards (SS) and full time union officials (FTO), and their respective contradictory roles within the union. A section on workers councils or political soviets does not differentiate between them. The part played by the CP is covered comprehensively, though conventionally. Two areas which are neglected are that of the syndicalists in the aggressive struggles of the labour unrest 1910 to 1914, and the small but significant contributions by trotskysts in the years after 1935. These are political omissions, I suspect, rather than simple editorial ones.

Another point

Another major criticism concerns the international element. There are passing references to the US Teamsters in 1934, *Solidarity* in Poland, and COSATU in South Africa in the 1980's. The more important events are not dealt with - the French strikes in '36, the Dutch strikes against the NAZIs, Spanish workers in the Civil War and the big US strike waves either side of WW2. Even the central question of international workers organisations like the Communist International and its relations with national movements is not mentioned.

Relevance

Probably the key omission in the booklet concerns the lack of any discussion of current issues. If socialists are to win over other workers, they need answers to the issues people face in society, that is the arguments for socialism, and to daily workplace problems. From a multitude, take just two workplace items that SS face - strikes, and health and safety (H&S). So far as the latter is concerned, there is an extensive awareness of the dangers of ill health and accidents plus legal Regulations that have come in from the European Community. There are many health scandals which get a lot of publicity like asbestos and exposure to hazardous substances. These give an imaginative SS who is also a H&S rep considerable grounds for workplace agitation. Though there is substantially less action now than there was in the 1980's, the subject is still one worth pursuing.

Secondly, the book deals with industrial action as a historical event but the problem at the time is that employers at the time were still using workers apprehension as a stick to beat SS. Union full time staff reinforce this approach as they are terrified of any action that may allow employers to threaten the union funds and their pay cheques. In practice, SS can often do little to reverse the situation. But careful preparation, judicious agitation, patient work for unity across grades and attention to the detail of organisation can bring results. For strikers, strikes are not illegal, despite the propaganda, only unlawful in common law. This means employers have to go Court to get redress and many are just bluffing about doing so, as recent strikes have shown.

Perspective on labour and Union national leaders

This last point incidentally exposes the union leaders and Labour government's inaction despite election promises. They are very quick to demand or promise legal changes on strikes which they say are the main reason for union weakness. In fact, the real damage is done by unemployment, not the anti union laws. The evidence for this can be found in the strike figures for the years 1940 to 51. During these years, striking was actually illegal, as was planning a strike but these times saw a wave of strikes much more numerous than any years since the Tories came to power. So much for the 'law'

This apparent contradiction is solved if you remember that unemployment in the war years was very low. So the next question is - what are union and Labour Government going to do about restoring union power by ending unemployment ? The answer is very little , but the book is silent.

The arguments for socialism in the book are rare. Evidence of the erosion of the welfare state appears daily. There is widespread concern over the remaining poverty in the UK and the World. Degeneration of the environment was more apparent every year. Centralisation and commercialisation are seen as advancing dangers. The booklet offers no answers for members to use in the workplace.

Revolutionary perspective ?

My final point about the content concerns the role of the party. It is central to revolutionaries that there is a need for some form of an organisation, with a journal to build greater awareness of the class struggle. Indeed many active union members will know that this is usually the crucial issue that separates political revolutionaries from union militants. Some considerable attention needs to be given then to this subject, yet the booklet largely ignores it.

Despite Callinicos' eminent position in the SWP, the Party is mentioned only a few occasions and the Socialist Worker newspaper not at all. While it is good to see an example of writing that does not exhibit Party chauvinism, it is equally bad that the subject of politics is only touched upon in vague and abstract terms. Unfortunately tagging on one or two paragraphs to the last chapter won't help much in this process. There is a need for a book on unions, control of society and socialism but this isn't it. Sadly the volume reflects the neglect of serious work on the industrial front by a group that puts itself forward for just this role

In conclusion I was outraged by the obvious inadequacy of this volume, even as an effective communication for the so called revolutionary party. My disillusionment with this subject was substantially increased.

Number three - Pay No Poll Tax !

In the Poll Tax campaign of the early 1990's, the Central Committee, after due consideration, explicitly ruled out any possibility of a residentially based, non payment revolt and the Party was instructed to concentrate exclusively on the workplace. The SWP pamphlet outlined this clearly. We had to put pressure on NALGO branches and members not to implement the scheme. This tactic left the field clear for *Militant* to organise on the mass resistance on the estates.

I think that if we had seriously tried to organise the estates as we had in the old Tottenham campaign, there would have been a small number of solid areas. This would have provoked a substantial crisis which would have made the central demos even bigger. This seems to me to have been a lost opportunity. The party was locked into a particular tactic which it pursued inflexibly, not for the first time. Eventually the line apparently fell into oblivion it seems but too late to affect the events nationally.

The 'intervention' tactic

So the leadership line stopped our comrades from being too involved on the local committees on a nationwide basis. It is significant that all the comrades agreed, there was limited opposition. We were to make "interventions" from the floor. The whole tactic of interventions raises a serious issue about the relationship of Party revolutionaries to other revolutionaries, and to people campaigning on single issues. If an organisation without a substantial working class base, sees the need to expand, "make roots" or whatever, then the tactic of "intervening" in other movements, parties or organisations seems to me to be a singularly ineffective way of achieving this.

In practice, the alternative is getting fully involved in an issue which means taking responsibility, becoming fully active and building a personal reputation for being a serious and committed fighter for the issue. This is the way to win support, to show that your ideas work in practice and to build influence. It could be called constructing a united front with others and winning the political struggle, but it requires all out effort, not just "intervening" from the outside.

Involvement out

Involvement is strongly discouraged as it is believed that this drags members into non party positions and that comrades cannot be spared from the essential task of building the party. The party line is that "interventions" are the proper action. This means turning up at meetings, denouncing all non revolutionary action, selling the SWP and trying to recruit members. Such a course of action is of course suicide for the reputation of the SWP, which may, in the short term, gain, but rarely keep, the occasional new member by intervening.

It becomes increasingly important that the revolutionaries are the leaders in the class not just isolated outsiders. This means that members must be active in the organisations of the class as well as, or in addition to, those of the party. It must be said that a large number of SWP members are not in this position. This is due in part at least to the party line on involvement in non party bodies, with the exception of workplace committees, etc. Reformist organisations and action committees are where the vast majority of politically conscious workers actually are. If the SWP is really concerned "to put down roots", it would encourage its members to become active and get leading positions in reformist action committees. This would be within some defined limits and under some form of party supervision

Back to the Poll Tax, - fortunately in Enfield, we became quite committed and at an important meeting, combined with the LP to outvote the *Militant* who were being very sectarian over joint work, the composition of the committee and so on. Our tactics gave us a base in the area for years to come.

The picture nationwide was different. *Militant* manipulated the situation to openly build their organisation, sell their paper, etc. The *Socialist Party* as it became was able to play a leading role in the Socialist Alliances a decade later, partly as a result of the dominance they achieved in the Poll Tax days, a dominance that we handed them. In Enfield, their sectarian and party chauvinist tactics resulted in collapse, and one that they never recovered from. Our experience with tenants had showed the volatility of these campaigns but of course these comrades never learn.

Nationally, *Militant's* rapid decline can be dated from their statements that they would assist the police to root out the "troublemakers" who had rioted in the West End of London after a lengthy battle in Trafalgar Square. Many of us took part in this battle, dodging into buildings to escape police horse charges and using whatever weapons came to hand. This was police violence in its usual violent form. Most police violence comprises murdering young black men, and other unfortunates, in back alleys or police stations. This was out in the open, mass repression.

Personal

I personally did go with groups of rioters around the West End, and saw cars overturned, windows smashed, and so on but did not join in what seemed to be an orgy of destruction. Although the riot around the rich districts was perhaps politically explicit, it did not seem like resisting the police violence or breaking their cordons so I just kept my distance, rightly or wrongly. *Militant* siding with the police crashed their reputation in any case. I'm not sure that the riot brought down the Thatcher government but it certainly helped.

Tottenham

In the Tottenham SWP, my son Peter who had joined the organisation two years previously, insisted on participating fully in the local anti poll tax committee. For this he was put under enormous pressure, frequent telephone calls and so on by the SWP comrades. As he was not a NALGO local government member and could not argue for action in the workplace he was told to go to local APT meeting and "intervene". That is make long speeches about revolution with the added help of miscellaneous quotations from Lenin and Trotsky.

The end result of all this intervening was that all the best people afterwards set up an organisation called the Haringey Solidarity Group. The HSG kept up its organisation for many years. While it had many committed comrades and did plenty of useful work on local issues, its politics remained anarchist - no electoral activity, setting up revolutionary breakaway unions, and a profound suspicion of revolutionary socialists, especially the SWP.

There is no guarantee that proper politics from the SWP would have prevented this, but we could certainly have had an influence. Thus do misguided politics bring their own reward, and the party found itself largely outside the anti capitalist revolt of 1999/2000 and had to claw its way back in by dubious methods, but that's another story.

I wrote an article on Poll Tax literature for the *Radical Bookseller*. This was somewhat critical of the SWP line as outlined above. As it happened, this was to be one of the last issues of the *Radical Bookseller*, which I'm sure is a pure co-incidence.

Next mistake

The Lionel S affair is next on our agenda. It was a dispute in the area of sexual politics [perceived as feminism in this case] and came in 1989. The issue was a theory proposed by an ex Trotskyist, Chris K about pre-history and women's oppression. The foundation of Marxist ideas on this were laid down by Engels in *The Origin of the Family*. He wrote that in primitive society there had been a rough form of equality, based on the scarcity of resources within hunter-gather societies. This was characterised as primitive communism.

The adoption of agriculture had led to a big expansion in the means of production and this new wealth had resulted in a new class of kings, etc. who had commandeered it. Henceforth, women's role became primarily child bearing and the mechanism by which wealth was passed on to male heirs and it was all downhill thereafter. Subsequent changes in society had retained female oppression within class based society.

Engels theory, briefly outlined above, has remained intact despite various attacks. Chris K's theory proposed that at an earlier stage, women had suffered a defeat due to the depletion of hunted animals and the subsequent fragmentation of society. Prior to this, hunter gather groups had developed a pattern of living based on a natural clock, the moon. Regular hunting parties of males would go out for 2 weeks and on their return, there would be lots to eat for another 2 weeks. Women synchronised their menstrual periods to coincide with the hunting sessions through the 28 day cycle of the moon, so there was a good deal of sexual intercourse in the second two weeks.

With the developing shortage of big game animals, this pattern of behaviour gradually changed. The large social groups fragmented into smaller ones and women were unable to act collectively. This allowed the men to individually oppress women. The theory portrayed in two ways either as an application of Engels ideas [Chris K] or as rejection of Engels [Chris Harman for the SWP CC].

There was, it seems, plenty of evidence to support the new theory largely based on the interpretation of folk stories around the world. Much of this was technical which needed arguing out. The theory was propagated by Lionel S, who was living with Chris K's sister, Liz in the Enfield branch, at the time, and was a long-standing member. Chris had organised

independently an evening course which I attended, unaware of the implications. He wrote a short booklet *The Origins of Human Society*, which was published by the Radical Anthropology Group, RAG. In 1991 a 600 page book was published "Blood Relations" but it was expensive. The 45 page summary version was enough for most non experts.

The essence of the debate was summarised in a four page RAG leaflet. It describes the events simply and looks at the Harman position. He says that apes - like humans - are co-operative, sharing and exercise self restraint in a group. This it characterises as "gradualist" and basically a statement of the socio-biological school of palaeo-anthropology, a "legitimate" scientific view. The RAG counterposes to this "revisionism", the truly communistic co-operativeness of humans, says apes are not collective and claims to be in line with Marx and Engels revolutionary approach. The leaflet ends with a series of quotations contrasting Engels and Harman. I must say that I found the RAG explanation more convincing, but it was clearly a technical argument, largely beyond non experts.

The issue

What was disconcerting was the sudden violent response of the Central Committee after some years of debate. Its members went as a group to meetings at the Annual Marxism summer event where Lionel spoke and severely heckled him. For me this assumed more importance than the original issue. Articles he wrote were rejected - a common enough experience for anyone who thought for themselves in the organisation - but when he did get them published, they were countered in the most aggressive and uncomradely way.

Finally there was a review in *International Socialism* by Chris Harman of "Blood Relations" which can only be described as stalinist. This personally attacked Chris K because of his previous association with Ken Livingstone, though no such scruples had been apparent in the actual recruitment of ex CP or SLL members. Guilt by association was the crime it seems.

The article was intended to close the "discussion". This is effectively what happened. The position taken by the CC appears to be based on the feminist implications of the theory, which seems a shallow argument. Lionel left the SWP soon after, I believe, but has since returned. Unlike many others he remains very active in revolutionary issues, his drum band being prominent on many demonstrations. The matter rests there, unsatisfactory as it may be.

Central Committed reverts to the norm

Perhaps the most damaging aspect was the response of the CC towards comrades who were in any ways assisting Lionel. Some Enfield comrades who gave out leaflets at the Marxism educational event in 1992 advertising a meeting on the subject. A personal interview with Tony Cliff followed and they were threatened with expulsion, if they repeated the action. I was astonished by this quite authoritarian attitude, but our protests did not cut much ice

The significance of the incident was not the rights or wrongs of the issue - only time can decide this - but the authoritarian attitude of the leadership. It has been commented that the Trotskyist movement which had opposed Stalinism so vehemently, ended up merely adopting its organisation and attitudes as a whole. That was the conclusion which I drew regarding the SWP. I have been severely critical of Chris K in many capacities and had many disagreements, but he was entitled to a fair hearing not a kangaroo trial

Adding the faults up

This series of gross political errors over the early 1990s led me to re-think my ideas. Was the SWP not suffering from a list of separate mistakes, which it would not have made in previous decades, but in fact had simply stopped being revolutionary and adopted more modest and conventional philosophies? I reviewed my long standing scepticism and came to the negative conclusion.

Self criticism

I think it would be only proper if I recorded some of my own faults with regard to the general picture of political activity. In terms of my own political activity, I have generally concentrated on practical local action, rather than in theoretical analysis or national level work. The disadvantages are that my theoretical capacity has been severely under developed. There are areas of conventional capitalist theory that I struggle through, never having had much education in the area. This is substantially my own fault. I have always read books but usually they have been related to unions, working conditions or social history. I have read widely as well but not systematically. In any case I like to be comprehensive and enquiring in my approach and read up from numerous sources.

I have not really seen the value of the better sessions of the annual "Marxism" held in London in July. In my defence I have often been working and I cannot leave shop stewards to go to political educational events. It should also be said that for many years I had family commitments which limited my activities and other things had priority. Nonetheless, I have seriously neglected theoretical issues, as the more perceptive readers may

have noted. It is something that is a side product of my specific type of activity.

To place this aspect into a context, it should be realised that the early membership of the IS was very largely students and teachers. There seemed no shortage of people who could analyse a situation until the cows came home. My own particular interests and abilities seemed to lie in coming up with proposals, and putting them into practice. Because the organisation seemed so closely to overlap my own perspectives, I think I saw little need to theorise. I think this applies to the other consideration, below, as well. I think I decided, not completely consciously, to let others do the theoretical work while I did what I was good at - getting involved in the class taking action.

The second consequence of my approach has been a parallel neglect of the national situation. I was only briefly active at a national level in the Party, on the National Committee and Industrial Sub Committee. During this period Duncan Hallas did try to "national-ise" me by setting up a committee of three - him, me and Cliff - as a sort of Administrative Troika, but it didn't work out. I did work as Secretary to the Industrial Sub Committee [of the IS National Committee] until it was clear that a full time worker was what the Party wanted. Apart from these functions, I have been active at branch and workplace level only.

It is also clear that I have never shown much interest in national matters. I don't think I've been to more than two annual conferences or whatever they are called, in 35 years. Partly this is due to the practice of sending along younger comrades, and I can scarcely remember being one of those, but I have not been concerned anyway with the proceedings. I think that delegating to others that which they seemed interested in, and which I was generally satisfied with, has also been a factor. This has meant that I have not been directly involved in national politics like some other comrades for example. I have not made personally friends with people in the leadership despite knowing them for 30 years. To an extent, there has been a sort of clique ness about the leadership. Possibly because of my own character, I have never sought to be part of that clique and indeed have always sought to distance myself from it, for reasons that are not entirely clear to me even now. I cannot fully explain my attitude.

Hence when people said that certain comrades have been expelled, I took little notice at the time. Perhaps I imagined that they were the "theorisers", and cynically decided they were too many of them anyway. Seriously, my dissatisfaction with the national leadership had never been focused. My experience of the faction fight in Coventry taught me how destructive these

events could be, despite the fact that we did not seek it. Nor have I felt that the issues of national decision could be influenced by my actions. Such activity would only be ineffective and diverting. It is only retrospectively that I have formulated my criticism and ideas into a coherent and related whole.

Conclusions and the case for socialist libertarianism

The accumulated evidence outlined above gave rise to my increasing dissatisfaction with the politics and practice of the SWP. In the end I adopted the political perspectives of the old council communists and turned more and more to libertarianism as a movement. I have some criticism of anarchism as such, but it avoids the massive mistakes of the marxists, and provides the only valid basis for future development, for all my reservations

Stripped of much of the supporting evidence, we can summarise the essence of Socialist Libertarianism as arising from the emergence of workers councils in the strike movement in Eastern Europe in the decade prior to the 1905 revolution. Secondly from the practical emergence of the shop stewards committees, whatever name they went under, in the industrial countries

In the main case, during this neglected movement, previously unorganised workers mounted a fundamental challenge to existing society. Workplace organisation grew exponentially into hundreds of workers councils, mainly as strike committees. The resistance transmuted itself into political formations of committees organised around workplaces, or councils. Later a specifically Russian form, level two bodies began to appear with the area soviet of workplace delegates. This structure has remained associated exclusively with Russian history and does not appear in that form in the numerous subsequent manifestations of workers councils and their political associations.

The revolutionary events of 1905 in east Europe focussed attention on the foundation of a new epoch [Harcave] though recognition of this was sparse. The analysis was drawn incompletely, by two socialists on the Left wing of the nominally marxist German Labour Party or SDP. Rosa Luxemburg wrote a politically incisive book contrasting the complacency of the German marxist party with the collective aggression of the east European workers and their strike wave [1906].

Anton Pannekoek drew more radical conclusions. He greeted the new movement more systematically in a booklet *on Tactical Differences in the Workers Movement* in 1912. He was actually Dutch, but active in Germany. Anarchist writers were to draw similar conclusions and their

ideas were to result in the formation of new anarcho syndicalist movements in many countries. This was to cause much debate in those circles as many of the old school of anarchists were critical of the exclusiveness of the innovation, and its over reliance on a single feature, the general strike. [Avrich]. The marxist writer Trotsky was merely descriptive of events around the insurrections , [1905]

More explicit formulation

Anton Pannekoek identified councils as the key structures in the new stage into which he believed society had moved with the new twentieth century. He later worked with Herman Gorter to lay the foundations for a political movement in which the revolutionary party did not rule authoritatively over the workers in the industrial bases. This was council communism [Bourinet]

A complete critique

Previous stages of social development that he identified were -

- that of the condition of no organisation at the workplace , hence total employer hegemony, marked by insurrections that were either heroic but doomed or to help another class - capitalists - seize power against feudalism,
- reformism, characterised by parliamentary representation [not democracy], labour parties, national trade unions and their formations, and small disjointed and sometimes suspect revolutionary groups. This was the age of winning and using the right to vote, securing minor changes around the edges of society, and a period of learning for workers and their organisations. Regrettably, capitalism has proved able to prolong this phase, and delay the new stage, but not, hopefully , for ever .

Of course Pannekoek was not alone in having identified the rise of mass organised labour as a precondition for the transmutation of workers socialism from a passive form of social resistance into a positive force capable of creating an alternative society. Although political thinkers had proposed theories about political economies for the working class [Noel Thompson], decades before Marx fused several of these into a his concept of class conflict, the conditions for the realisation have been most persuasively dated in the conditions of the twentieth century

Summary

In summary the workers' socialism depends on work based councils - unofficial, revolutionary and based on direct action - which are the pivot around which our theory stands. They are the realisation of control over our

lives, which is the core of socialism. This idea, applied to the most universal experience of work, is the meaning of workers' socialism.

Another version of "socialism"

From the turn of the century, Vladimir Lenin, pursued the revolutionary idea by proposing a theory of the highly centralised professional party which would lead the workers and peasants. His main reason for this, that workers could not alone develop their own political policies or practice has been shown to be invalid but his point about a central party in face of the grossly reactionary government and vast size of the country, though partially justified at the time, have been reformed into the theory of leninism. But his overall theory was rejected even by such future colleagues as Trotsky - "a potential dictatorship" he said - and certainly a whole range of traditional "left" and libertarian activists. Their warnings were to come only too tragically true.

Back to our main theme

A new political economy begins to emerge. The events of the first Russian revolution occurred at the start of what was to become the greatest wave of workers activity so far. The decade from the beginning of the century was the time when there were an increasing number of strikes, coinciding with the expansion of what was termed revolutionary syndicalism, a new development within anarchism. Some comment on this are contained above in the paragraphs on Pannekoek, and below.

Up to 1914

The period was marked by the growth of negotiating power of workers in the larger and more structured workplaces but also the establishment of the institution of collective bargaining arrangements between unions and employers. Behind this came a drift to the right of official labour parties and a bureaucratisation of the 'marxist' parties, a continuous process.

Syndicalism which emphasized the workplace, rather than political leadership, was a much more attractive proposition. Even in countries with little existing syndicalist organisation like Britain and Russia, new organisations were set up, joining the established movements in France [Gambone] Spain and Italy. The Russians called themselves anarcho syndicalist to clarify their affiliation, and the expression was adopted elsewhere [Skirda]

In Britain for example, pockets of resistance grew while the 'marxist' British Socialist Party studiously neglected the industrial struggle [Holton] The workplace activists of the "great discontent" decade were to become

significant all over Europe in the crisis towards the end of the cataclysmic and terrible war soon to be unleashed: Unofficial Miners groups etc]

World war one and the first international outbreak

The political earthquake of the world war added fuel to the situation of an old political order trying to retain social control while fighting among themselves. Workers in the combatant countries were to quickly lose their nationalistic chauvinism as material circumstances worsened and governments became openly more oppressive.

In Britain and Germany especially this was so and in the former case, a combination of organised workplaces, syndicalist politics and a deviant marxist party, the Socialist Labour Party, were to combine into a new rank and file movement, the Shop Stewards and Workers Committee movement. Based on firmly anarchist principles of organisation, they had a practice of supporting the union national officials, or staff, as long as they supported the workers, and became influential from 1917. Essentially the elected leaders, not an executive but an administrative committee, were closely bound to representative meetings.

A national structure

Originating in the Scottish Clyde Workers Committee but spreading to the big armaments works of Manchester, London and so on, the new structure was grounded on a principle of dual representation - by the union nationally but by the SS&WC organisation for the workplace. It should be remembered that the official trade unions, like the labour party, were committed to the war. This was true on both sides, despite the rhetoric about internationalism, a situation strangely familiar today. Dual representation anyway was not quite the head-on conflict that dual unionism implied, as believed by some anarchists. [Murphy]

Be that as it may, industrial disputes strengthened the SSWCM and it was only with peace that employers, government, and union leadership took their revenge. Victimization and then unemployment was to be the fate of the shop stewards, like many of their constituents. They became leaders of the unemployed in the 1920s, and of the mass unemployed of the 1930s. The general strike of 1926 registered the final re-establishment of law and order and reformism, and the defeat of even the remnants of anarcho syndicalism in Britain.

The strongest case

In Germany at the end of 1918 resistance was even stronger and a huge wave of workers councils came with military defeat [Carsten] The labour party, SPD, led the retrenchment of the old ruling class, amid this greatest crisis to hit the country to date. In the chaos that followed, the Labourites allied themselves to the core of the German ruling class and put down workers revolt. In the re-establishment of 'Law and Order', leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebnetch were murdered. Oscar Hippe, imprisoned by both Nazis and Communists, gives personal descriptions [Hippe].

The small number of German revolutionaries adopted a policy of bypassing parliament in favour of workers' councils and rejecting work in the ultra reformist trade unions, copying almost exactly the Bolsheviks successful programme of 1917. Lenin's response, two months after the war, was that circumstances had changed and that the revolutionaries should participate in parliament and existing the existing union organisation. The majority of the revolutionaries, as represented at the inaugural conference of the German Communist Party, rejected his directives [Appell].

Split

The dispute grew and readers can speculate at will about the Bolshevik leaderships' policies [Brinton], but the end result was that the German rebels rejected the Russian "guidance" and were thrown out of the official Party, KPD, and the Third International, or Comintern. After a long political debate, the highlight of which was Herman Gorter's destruction of Lenin's arguments in *Left Wing Communism* with the *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin*, they set up their own organisation, the German Workers Communist Party, KAPD. This was based on the workers councils

They had developed their political programme, starting with the denial of the CP USSR's right to dictate international policy. The economic, political and social structure in Europe was different to Russia's and hence they claimed the right to determine their own programme. From this developed the analysis of Russia and the adoption of the anarchist critique of state capitalism. So what we call council communism began to develop on the basis of Russian repression of councils

Council communism

By 1921, there were 'council communist' groups in several countries, an International structure, and an independent policy. This kept much of the marxist theory but posited a non authoritarian revolutionary party. Aspects of anarcho syndicalism, for example that councils were both a

centre of resistance today and the basis for the new society tomorrow, used this idea. Activists used this idea in the Italian councils [Williams]

The anarchist contribution

Another point taken from "libertarian socialists" was the importance of the personal initiative over issues, rather than passively following party directives. This was applied in the KAPD which as a result was universally acknowledged as more effective than the official KPD. The latter was to be increasingly composed, as the decade progressed, of party apparatchniks of varying affiliations and their followers.

One final point about the political basis of council communism/worker's socialism. The use of electoral action - Gorter pointed out in his demolition of Lenin's argument that the current revolutionary struggle required the most effective political weapons and that consequently electoral method which had proved highly ineffective in the revolutionary crisis, could not be deployed. Elsewhere he considered the struggle in more stable periods and said that in those circumstances, it may be justified to use it as a tactic.

This contrasts with Leninist ideas for advanced societies which appears to encourage the conclusion that the emphasis on political method results inevitably in electoralism having a prominent role. The role of modern leninists like the Socialist Workers Party and their devotion to the parliamentary conventions gives every sign of this tendency.

Gorter's concept also contrasts with the view of most anarchists who regard anti parliamentary action as a principle, rather than a tactic. In practice some anarchists like Guy Aldred have used it as a tactic and ventured into the field [Taylor Caldwell]. Socialists Libertarians believe in fighting on all fronts wherever the political struggle occurs. This includes both participating in elections, if necessary, and using the hard won right-to-vote and standing for elected office at all levels, as part of the struggle. A final point of difference concerns the political organisation which Socialist Libertarians honestly admit is necessary - many anarchist do in fact have such a structure but hide it in rhetoric and verbiage.

So council communism as it emerged was crudely, some marxism plus some anarcho syndicalism. It was strongest in Germany where its industrial base was around the councils until they were emasculated into little more than works councils,. Most of the activists were in the AAE industrial union and the council communists were to be especially active in the lost German revolution of 1923 .

The history of the KAPD during the first decade reflected both a decline due to state repression and recruitment from the official Communists as Stalinism was imposed. In 1933, Hitler destroyed most of the genuine labour movement and the political left. Numbers of KAPD comrades escaped to Holland where the GIK assumed leadership.

The Spanish revolution in 1936-39 also provide support curiously for council communist ideas. With the capitulation of the anarchist unions and FAI political group, many rank and file turned to the concept of Gorter and Pannekoek in a vain attempt to save their movement. These were the Friends of Durruti. As in 1933, fascism unfortunately won the day

Council communism kept going, though Gorter died in 1927, with Pannekoek writing his major book in 1947. He died in 1961.

The above paragraphs comprise the basis of council communism, today often called socialist libertarianism. Workers councils revived in 1956 after the Hungarian revolt and have been a consistent feature of workers insurrection since. I end this chapter and this book with a appendix of workers councils and references for further information

Appendix *Gazetteer of workers councils*

** Algeria*

The former French North African colony was the scene of a bitter and bloody anti imperialist war, and the new regime under socialist Ben Bella allowed workers to take over deserted workplaces. The workers councils were based on the German supervisory councils model and inspired by the official Yugoslav state run councils. They were known as conseil de travailleurs. They flourished only briefly in 1962-66 within a state capitalist society, before the Army repressed them and their patron. Ian Clegg, : Workers Self Management in Algeria [1971, 249 pp];

Argentina

Argentina's explosive revolt in 2001, at one level, building on the Peronista gains of fifty years previous but at another rejecting outright the authoritarian nature of the precedents [Sitirin] Financial collapse under ruinous international interest charges prompted popular revolt. Working class organisations, veterans in the fight against authoritarian regimes, were supplemented by more prosperous citizens as banks froze personal accounts. The previously small piqueteros with their road blocks, joined to make a formidable movement. Neighbourhood assemblies spread over the main cities and a federated national structure was established.

Dozens of abandoned workplaces were taken over. Some became co-ops and got state funding but other such as Zanon Ceramics, after a decade of bitter struggle, were occupied and resumed production as outright examples of alternative production. A small wave of worker run institutions, including co-ops, aided by unemployed piqueteros and their blockades, have made up the resistance since then. It remains as a possible model for future episodes of social transformation.

See John Jordan, J and Jennifer Whitney: Argentina's Popular Uprising - an eye witness account of the financial meltdown and ongoing grassroots rebellion [2004, 58 pp];

Marina Sitrin: Horizontalism - voices of popular power in Argentina [2006, 256pp];

Austria

At the end of world war one in 1918, German workers resistance, aided by a more militant section of the labour party, SDP, prompted the establishment of workers, soldiers and peasants councils. There was little progress towards alternative politics and the councils were gradually incorporated, unlike the more violence fate of their German equivalents. G E R Gedye.: Fallen Bastions [1939, 519 pp]; old but not yet replaced;

Bavaria

Another German province saw the late development of a Workers Republic based on workplace councils, and some peasant committees in 1919. Both marxist and anarchist members were involved. The regime did not last the month. German mercenary troops, directed by an alliance of SDP and the ruling class, broke the Republic and massacred thousands to establish traditional law and order.

, F. L Carsten. : Revolution in Central Europe 1918 - 1919, [1972, 360 pp]

Gustav Landauer : For Socialism [1911 Germany & 1978 USA, 150pp], main volume of life long socialist, martyr of the Bavarian revolutionary government;

Bolivia

Bolivia, with its strikes, councils and militias of the 1950s, and neighbourhood councils which inspired the mass movements from 1993, is an ongoing situation. The strength of the councils here, and their resilience against the political leadership of Evo Morales, is an inspiration [Crabtree]; This is unfinished business as the old vested interests are currently campaigning around "autonomy" by which they mean retaining old powers within selected regions of the country. Watch this space!

John Crabtree: Patterns of Protest - politics and social movements in Bolivia [2005, 118 pp]

Britain

Syndicalist inspired shop stewards, plus an imaginative marxist Socialist Labour Party, built a movement opposing the government's war policies during world war one. It prevaricated over the war itself, which was supported by the official trade unions and labour party. [Murphy] The end of hostilities saw the employers and State revenge, watched passively by official union leaders. Victimisation and unemployment broke the Shop Stewards and Workers Committee movement in 1919 and the rump joined the communist party and ran the organisations of the unemployed until 1940. War created full employment and a revival of workplace organisation that lasted for decades. This was characterised, optimistically, as socialism in the workplace.

Ray Challinor: Origins of British Bolshevism [1977, 290 pp], and James, CLR as JR Johnson, Grace C Lee and Pierre Chaulieu (Cornelius Castoriadis) : Facing Reality : the new society, where to look for it, how to bring it closer, [1958 USA (listed under Lee ?), 174 pp ;

JT (Jack) Murphy : The Workers' Committee - an outline of its principles and structure [1917 & 72, 26 pp],

Alan Woodward : The Deeper Meaning of the Struggle - an outline history of the international shop stewards movement and socialism [2009, 64 pp],

Chile

Capitalist market economics created a crisis leading to the election of the reformist President Allende in 1972. Workers committees soon formed in the industrial areas of cities, and in the neighbourhoods, cordon industriales. US interests conspired with the military, and a coup by Pinochet killed the timid Allende but also thousands of workers after 1974.

Pointblank ; Strange Defeat - the Chilean revolution 1973 [2005?, Black Flag 223, 4pp] ; or Andrew Zimbalist and James Petras : Workers' Control in Allende's Chile [1975 ?, 9 pp]

Mike Gonzales: Chile 1972-3 [40 pp] in Colin Barker : Revolutionary Rehearsals [1987, 270 pp

China

Nationalist, anarchist and communist forces combined to oppose the traditional war lord leaders in the 1920s. Workers took control of cities when a joint liberatory army advanced from the south. Nationalists then turned on the communists and massacred them and the workers council leaders in 1927. Stalin, fighting Trotsky, manipulated the situation, sacrificing more workers in a further hopeless insurrection, but promoting Trotsky's defeat in Russia. The communists retired into internal exile and under Mao Tse Tung fought a long guerrilla war until military victory resulted in a state capitalist regime in 1949 This has repeatedly crushed opposition, most notably at Tianamen Square in 1990. Capitalist

economics have stimulated a large expansion but under a non socialist regime. Recently female factory workers have registered resistance .

Jean Chesneau: The Chinese Labour Movement 1919-27 [1968, 574 pp] classic communist text ;

Arif Dirlik: Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution [1991 USA, 326 pp];

Mouvement Communiste . Workers autonomy - strikes in China , [2011, 48pp]

Czechoslovakia

East European workers resisting Stalin's military occupation, rebelled under the 'liberal ' President Alexander Dubcek and quickly established workplace councils in factories in 1968. Dubcek was deposed and the councils disbanded by Russian troops comparatively easily.

Vladimir, Fiser, editor : Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia : documents and essays. [1978, 199 pp] ;

France

Three major episodes of workers insurrection occurred in 1871, 1936 and 1968 respectively. The first was centred on the Commune in Paris, opposing German troop but massacred by French soldiers. A parliamentary regime, underpinned by the revolutionary National Guard, went down. Secondly a massive general strike and widespread occupation of the factories in 1936 resulted in a communist party led government that progressively sold away all the gains and refused to help revolutionary Spain.

The entirely unexpected worker and student revolt in the late 1960s suffered much the same fate due to communist treachery but provoked a revival in the revolutionary movement around the world. Periodic smaller revolts have followed. French union organisation has inspired syndicalism during the century, to become the third section of the workers movement, beside labourism and communism, on an international scale.

Stewart Edwards, : The Paris Commune 1871. [1971, 471 pp] ;

Jacques Danos and Marcel Gibelin : June '36 [1986, 272 pp] ;

Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit.: Obsolete Communism - the left wing alternative [1969, 256 pp] ;

Germany

Military defeat in November 1918. resulted in a colossal wave of workers, soldiers and peasants councils that effectively controlled the country. Sadly the small revolutionary movement was overwhelmed and the reformist labour party, SDP, was allowed to form a political alliance that organised military repression of workers. Communists members split , some organising revolt but others following Lenin's growing conservatism.

One group formed the German Workers Communist Party in 1921 based on workers councils while the minority adopted orthodox strategies of Lenin's CP. Appel's account when accessible, is a source.

Either way, were either arbeiterrate -workers councils- or betreibsrate -shop stewards councils. Both wings were smashed by Hitler in 1933, who was aided by the party chauvinism of both communists and labour party. Council communist ideas survived and form the core of modern workers' socialism - an industrial council base supported by a non dominant revolutionary party.

Jan Appel : The Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution [1930 Berlin & 1990 translation, 589pp] privately published: by Joe Thomas, Movement for Workers Councils; economic proposals for the period after evolution. It is also autobiographical, and formed basis of educational work of Dutch councilists, GIK, in 1930s

Oscar Hippe,: ... And Red is the Colour of Our Flag [1991, 310p];

F. L. Carsten,: Revolution in Central Europe 1918 - 1919, [1972, 360 pp]

Hungary

The most significant revolt against the Russians occupying the country when workers in 1956 mounted an insurrection. This was characterised by a re birth of workers councils, and liberationary socialism. Organised military resistance held back the Russian soldiers for days before the tank warfare led to defeat but not the disbandment of the councils. The aftermath split the world communist movement and it never fully recovered. Modern revolutionary movements date from 1956, promoted initially by writers like CLR James.

Andy Anderson,: Hungary '56 [1964, 120p] ; still available today;

R M Jones /Scorcher publications : The Hungarian Revolution 1956, Council Communist pamphlet no 1 [1984, 24 pp];

Indonesia 1945-46, [Jafar Suryomenggolo, in Ness, below]

One of the best articles in this collection covers the little known workers councils in Java in 1945 to 46. It illustrates all the salient points :

- *the emergence of councils as the existing order fails ;*
- *immediate suspicion of the nationalists and socialists in government that this is a threat to their power ;*
- *the adoption of the classic marxist techniques, language and perspectives so well known since Lenin's first use in 1918 post revolutionary Russia to repress the councils.*

The account is throughout characterised by an independent and straightforward approach quite different to the rest of the contents and their marxist propagandism.

Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, eds : Ours to Master and to Own - workers control from the commune to the present [2011, 443 pp]

Iran

The ruling Shah, corrupt and controlled by the USA, was overthrown by workers shoras and neighbourhood committees. Sadly the revolution was hijacked by muslim fundamentalists who massacred and repressed in the old style. Saddam Hussein fought an internationally backed war from Iraq against the new regime anyway, when he was the darling of USA and Britain despite the killings. There are still occasional shora revolts., but these are lost in the USA/UK war against Hussein and the subsequent civil war. Assef Bayat, : Workers and Revolution in Iran [1987, 227 pp] recommended general text with traditional approach ; Maya, Payanonnis, on Iran in Colin Barker - Revolutionary Rehearsals [1987, 27 pp] ;

Ireland

Workers revolutionary syndicalism was a strong component in the nationalist forces that defeated the British troops 1920-22. Industrial action proved as powerful as armed revolt, with over 100 workplaces occupied, known incorrectly as 'soviets'. Once again, the new regime in the south and the old one in the north used violence and religious ideology to disperse the movement .

Conor Kostick, : Revolution in Ireland - popular militancy 1917 to 1923 [1996, 239 pp] ; excellent analysis of workers/ military power in particular ;

Italy

A strong syndicalist movement, aided by Antonio Gramsci's marxist group, pushed reformist union leaders into extensive factory occupations, firstly in Turin and later nationally. Shop committees were called internal commissions. Italian Labour Party action , both within the revolt and in parliament, diverted the struggle, isolating the shop stewards in 1921. The Labour Party subsequently split, many going into the communists. Fascism was adopted by the ruling class, and all the left was crushed. Italian workers have exploded into street revolts and action committees after 1945 and 1969 but the legacy of communism precluded united action.

Quentin, Hoare, ed. : Antonio Gramsci - Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920, [1977, 393 pp].

Gwynne A Williams : Proletarian Order - Antonio Gramsci, factory councils and the origins of Italian communism 1911-21 [1975, 370pp],

Israel

For a brief period around 1935, workers co-ops, or kibbutzim, coalesced around a form of collective socialism. Nationalism quickly dominated the anti imperialist struggle and began its own form of oppression of the native Arabs, despite the lessons of the Holocaust. The rest is history, with Zionism triumphant, favoured by US aid, legitimising authoritarian Arab

rulers and separately victimising Palestinians. Nothing socialist remains, beyond courageous individuals against a terror State.

Akiva Orr in Solidarity 712 journal

Poland

With a long history of Jewish anarchism and workers' revolt, since 1905, the Polish labour movement was prominent against Russian occupation from 1956. By 1980, workplace organisation, aided by crude religious ideology, launched a big move against the Red Army, a puppet Polish government, and phoney workers councils. Solidarnosc, or Solidarity, set up their own structures but political organisation did not measure up to its industrial counterpart. The repression delayed retribution by less than a decade, but any hope of workers' socialism after of the mass revolt of 1980 has been smothered by burgeoning capitalism and the EC.

Colin Barker: Festival of the Oppressed [1986, 192 pp] ;

Henri Simon : Poland 1980-82- class struggle and the crisis of capital [1985 Canada, 144 pp], brilliant account of Solidarnosc becoming 'normal'

Portugal

A quite unexpected rebellion by Army conscripts against a corrupt semi fascist regime in 1974 was used by workers to liberate their workplaces , estates and neighbourhoods, Despite some rapid independent growth, the dominant communist politics was eventually replaced by a predictable labour party and curiously non violent counter revolution. Indigenous syndicalism was encouraged by the liberation, but reformisms won.

Phil, Mailer, : Portugal, the impossible revolution, [1977, 399 pp] ;

Russia

Three revolutions - in 1905, 1917 and 1921 - had different results. The first, also the birth of mass workers power , was crudely repressed. However workers councils were formed on a large scale and soviets - politically dominated area bodies - formed a raw people government that was to prove effective in the next decade. The second, initially victorious , was instantly hijacked by the Party Communism of Lenin and Trotsky, etc. Capitalist military intervention subsequently weakened the political resources and consolidated opposition, Anarchist resistance remained .but the workers councils were broken, or taken over as state soviets . [Aves]

By 1921, continued war communism polarised opinion and industrial unrest around the demand for 'soviets without bolsheviks ' was widespread. General strikes, peasant uprisings and the Kronstadt insurrection among revolutionary sailors, were militarily repressed and this was reflected in internal party opposition. Lenin, Trotsky , and later Stalin, trampled on them all as 'revolutionary socialism' was replaced by state capitalism. Trotsky's belated left opposition joined the victims during midnight in the

century. *Russia joined the repressors of liberty, where it suited their national interest, around the world.*

Oscar Anweiler: The Soviets - the Russian worker's, peasant's, and soldier's councils 1905 to 21 [1974 USA, 337 pp] ;

Steven A. Smith.: Red Petrograd - revolution in the factories 1917-18, [1983, 347pp] ;

Jonathan Aves: Workers Against Lenin - labour protests and the Bolshevik dictatorship [1996 220 pp]

Maurice Brinton (Chris Pallis) : The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, 1917-21 [1970, 86pp] see also Goodway, David

Spain

The traditional rulers, threatened by popular revolt, were rescued by a fascist military mutiny which was itself immediately suppressed by a workers insurrection in half the country in July 1936. Anarcho-syndicalists were organised in the union CNT and its political counterpart the FAI. Both faced a choice of joining other groups (reformists), which was not within their ideological framework, or running their own social revolution. They choose the former. At ground level, anarchist organisation plus more moderate socialist workers formed collectives to run industrial and rural workplaces, within a partly socialised economic and political structure. These had various titles but many were just comites. Welfare services were also transformed in this longest and most extensive revolution on record. The chosen parliamentary leadership plus nominal anarchists was gradually subverted by the reformist communists, boosted by Russian arms. Curiously a dissident group emerged named the Friends of Durruti which advocated council communist policies. They were attacked by the leadership but defended by the rank and file.

The social revolution was abandoned but the fascists, with German and Italian militaries, finally won in 1939. The Spanish revolution which pre-figured the second world war, brought disaster to anarchism but remains as a shining example of working class ability to run their society for some years.

Stuart Christie, : We , the anarchists ! - a study of the FAI 1927-37 [2000, 127pp] ;

Sam Dolgoff editor : The Spanish Collectives - workers management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-39 [1990 Canada , 194 pp] , based on Leval.

Agustin Guillamon, The Friends of Durruti Group 1937-1939 [1996, 114 pp] ,

Alan Woodward : The New World , perspectives on workers control in revolutionary Spain 1936-39 [2011, 84 pp] ;

Ukraine:

The resistance from 1905 lasted for some years but eventually various leaders were caught and executed , Makhno was imprisoned from 1908 where he was influenced by Arshinov politically. After 1917, he returned to his base and organised to eject the German troops. Later the Ukrainians set up many communes on the land and in industry, and also got rid of the old Czarist forces as well. The Bolshevik leadership now turned ruthlessly on their erstwhile allies, dispersed the partisans, broke up the collectives as they had done in Russia and forced Makhno and co into exile. [Arshinov] A reform movement in anarchism, The Platform, which called for a central institution, was set up Arshinov. Makhno and co campaigned on for their version of anarchism. Their writing survived them and have been revived ; Alexandre Skirda: Nestor Makhno , Anarchy's Cossack - the struggle for free soviets in the Ukraine 1917-1921 [2004, 415pp] .

Peter Arshinov: History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918 -21, [1923 & 1987, 284 pp] ;

United States - being compiled

Venezuela where the ex Army colonel Hugo Chavez has been in power for a decade and is gradually introducing some radical features This situation shows one of those curious south American specialities, in the form of an idiosyncratic military leaders whose reforms actually benefited the working class. Colonel Peron has been the model strong man and Chavez follows . [McCaughan]; He is using the vast oil revenues to introduce a welfare state , blocking the protesting reactionary elements whose methods, including an attempted military coup, lock outs , etc.

Workplace organisation has been slow to develop and has been partly state sponsored in Venezuela , raising the issue of the workers councils in Yugoslav, which came from similar sponsorship. A realist picture of Chavez as benevolent populist dictator is in Rafael Uzcategui: Venezuela - revolution as spectacle : [2010, 232 pp] translated by Chaz Bufe. He asks is this revolution or tradition and decided for the latter

West Bengal

A small scale outbreak of councils by textile workers spreading over a decade in India's communist run state , Summarised by Arup Kumar Sen in Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, eds : Ours to Master and to Own - workers control from the commune to the present [2011, 443 pp] . Aided in a small way by state aided funding but otherwise subject to the normal attacks by politicians , Parties and trade union leaders , Indian mill workers battled on for years in a prime example of hidden history. The account is written in marxist/ leninist language.

Yugoslavia

Tito's communist partisans fought off the German NAZIs but quickly fell out with Stalin's grand plans for a Russian empire, post 1945. The resulting Russian boycott was met with plans for a revival of workers councils, run officially, both to boost production and consolidate nationalism. Even so this experiment has provided useful information, institutions and inspiration internationally for all but card carrying communists. It was the first defeat for Stalinism. Over three decades, the institutes for worker participation - or basic organisations of associated labour - were absorbed piecemeal into the regime's market socialism, before post Tito nationalism destroyed the hard won unity. The resulting war was as disastrous as any.

Fred : Singleton, Workers self management and the role of trade unions in Yugoslavia, in Coates, above 1970;

Reading list

Many of these books will be available on the internet at the Advanced Book Exchange - a world wide network of book shops ;
 abebooks.com. [bookfinder.com is next , and Amazon with its strongly anti union practice to be avoided] . Council references in the Appendix

- ❑ Peter Alexander ; *Racism, resistance and revolution* [1987, 185pp] ;
- ❑ Eric Ambler, *The Mask of Dimitrios* [1966, 220pp] ;
- ❑ Paul Avrich: *Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* [1973, 179pp] ;
- ❑ Peter Bain ; *The 1986-7 News International Dispute: Was the Workers Defeat Inevitable?* [Historical Studies in Industrial Relations, 5, Keele university , 1998, 13 pp]
- ❑ Colin Barker and Joyce Rosser : *A Working Class defeat - the ENV story* [International Socialism Journal, first series , 1/31 , 9pp];
- ❑ Daniel Berman : *Death On the Job - Occupational H&S Struggles in the United States* [1978, 260pp] ;
- ❑ Marie Louise Berneri : *Workers in Stalin's Russia* [1944 & '49 88 pp] ;
- ❑ Janet Biehl, editor : *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, [1997, 244pp] ;
- ❑ Murray Bookchin: *The Modern Crisis* [1986 USA, 167pp] ;
- ❑ Ian Birchall ; *Tony Cliff - a marxist for his time* [2011, 664 pp]
- ❑ Ian H Birchall, *The Smallest Mass Party in the World*, [1981, 31pp] ;
- ❑ E.R. Braithwaite : "To Sir with Love" [1961 , 189 pp] ;
- ❑ Maurice Brinton : *Paris : May 68* [1968, 55 pp] see also Goodway
- ❑ Geoff Brown, : *Sabotage - a study in industrial conflict* [1977, 400p],
- ❑ BLSSCC : "The Edwardes Plan and Your Job" [1979, 12pp], Derek Robinson oppositional statement on factory rationalisation.
- ❑ *Dave Burns : "Rent Strike, S. Pancras 1960* [1972, 26pp] . ;
- ❑ Peter Caldwell ; *Bill Warman* ' in the WEA TUS Journal 17 , Summer 1988
- ❑ Alex Callinicos : *The Rank and File Movement Today*, [1982, 39pp]
- ❑ Alex Callinicos : *Trotskyism* [1990, 103pp] ;
- ❑ Alex Callinicos : *Socialists in the trade unions* [1995, 79pp] ;
- ❑ Larry Ceplair and Steve England : *The Inquisition in Hollywood - politics and the film community , 1930 - 1960* [1980 , 554pp] ;
- ❑ Andrew Chevalier : *Herbal First Aid - natural medicine* [1993, 47pp];
- ❑ Tony Cliff : *A World To Win* [[2000, 247pp] autobiography
- ❑ Tony Cliff : *Rosa Luxemburg*, [1959 and 1968 amended, 90pp] the second edition , shows a somewhat crude and unacknowledged reversal of the "line" on the two socialist writers Luxemburg and Lenin ;
- ❑ Tony Cliff (Ygael Gluckstein) and Colin Barker : *Incomes Policy, Legislation and Shop Steward* [1966, 136pp] ; *The Crisis - Social Contract or Socialism* [1975, 192pp] ; *The Employers Offensive : productivity deals and how to fight them* [1970, 234pp] ;
- ❑ Tony Cliff *State Capitalism in Russia* [1974, 310p]. originally Stalinist Russia
- ❑ Tony Cliff, and D. Gluckstein : *Marxism and the Trade Union Struggle - the general strike of 1926* [1987, 320pp] ;

- Ken Coates in the *1976 Socialist Register* ;
- A J, or Tony , Corfield : *Epoch in Workers Education* [1969, 272pp] ;
- Roger Cox : *Down the Road* (Sarah Cox and Robert Golden) [1977, 126pp] deals with unemployment and the Right To Work campaign ;
- Alan Dalton: *Asbestos Killer Dust ; a worker/community guide how to fight the hazards of asbestos and its substitutes* [1979, 287pp],.
- Ralph Darlington, & Dave Lyddon : *Glorious Summer - class struggle in Britain 1972, [1998, 316pp]* ;
- Gordon DeMarco : *October Heat* [1979, 230pp] ; political crime ;
- Jack Dromey & Graham Taylor : *Grunwicks : the workers story* [1978 , 207pp] ;
- Samuel S Epstein : *The Politics of Cancer* , [1979 USA , 628pp] ;
- Martyr Everett ; *The Anarchist Librarian, in Gunpowder Treason and Plot - political subversion in the library*
- Edward Fitzgerald: *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* [1859, 1986, 71pp] ;
- Michael Fitzgerald : *Ragged London - the life of London's poor* [2011, 191 pp] ;
- Laurie Flynn : *Asbestos - the dust that kills in the name of profit* [1972, 16pp] ;
- Paul Foot : *Immigration and Race in British Politics* [1965, 255pp]
- Eddie and Ruth Frow : *Engineering Struggles* [1982, 496pp]. for an uncritical account of the shop stewards movement, mainly in the AEU,
- Ian Gibson : *Class, Health and Profit*, [1981, 108pp] ;
- William Godwin: *Enquiry Concerning the Principals of Political Justice a political treatise* , in Marshall, below
- Reg Groves: Sharpen the Sickle | [1949, 256pp] farm workers history ;
- William Godwin ; *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* [1970? , 317pp]
- David Goodway, editor : *For Workers' Power - the selected writings of Maurice Brinton* [2004, 379pp] ;
- Herman Gorter : *An Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* [1920, 41 pp], page 21, demolition of the leninist claim to socialism ;
- Mary Griggs, *The Challenor Case.* [1965, 192pp] ;
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- Phil Higgs, own account in *Work* by Ronald Fraser , Vol 2, *The Convenor.* [1969, 29pp] This includes a paragraph or two on the gang system and is a coherent and articulate statement on workplace organisation ;
- Jim Higgins : *Speak one more Time - Jim Higgins selected writings* [2004, 191pp] ;
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- Michael Kidron : *Western Capitalism Since the War* [1968 , 196pp] ;
- Pat Kinnerley : *The Hazards of Work , and How to fight Them*, [1973, 394pp]
- Norma Kitson : *Where Sixpence Lives* [1987, 326pp] ;
- Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin : *Origins* [1977, 229 pp]
- Jim Lewis : Industry and innovation - the technological revolution in the Lea valley [2011, 112 pp] ;
- Libcom.org : "*Oh Sit Down - accounts of sit down strikes and workplace occupations in the UK and around the world*" [2009, 109 pp] this included details of Brighton refuse workers. Libcom.org is an online organising resource , and archive of news and information on workers struggles and its website include much of the contemporary material listed here.
- Jack London *The Assassination Bureau* [1964, 184 pp].;
- Rosa Luxemburg: *The Mass Strike , the Political Party and the Trade Union*, [1908 and more recently, 92 pp],
- Paul Mackney, *Birmingham and The Miners Strike* [1985, 150pp]
- Peter Marshall , ed : *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin*. [1986, 191pp] ;
- Peter Marshall : *Demand the Impossible - a history of anarchism* [1993, 767pp]
- Eamonn McCann : *Bloody Sunday in Derry -what really happened* [1992, 254pp] ;
- John McIlroy , *Every factory our fortress - Communist Party workplace branches in a time of militancy 1956-79*. Historical Studies in Industrial Relations 10, Autumn 2000, for one of the few sources on this neglected subject.
- Harry McShane and Joan Smith : *No Mean Fighter* [1978, 281pp] ;
- JPM Millar : *The Labour College Movement* [1979, 312pp] NCLC ? which is well researched and covers up to the closure in 1964.
- Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within - the secret war against the miners* , [1995, 511pp] ; probably the best single book on the strike ;
- Mike Milotte : *Communism in Modern Ireland* [1984, 326pp] ;
- Elaine Morgan : *The Aquatic Ape - a theory of human evolution* [1982 USA, 180 pp] ;
- Jack Moss : in *Fragments* , Woodward [1999, 120pp.] ,
- Arthur Marsh and Victoria Ryan *Clerks* [1999, 337 pp] ; union history ;
- Walter Mosely : *White Butterfly* [1992, 292] ;
- Mouvement Communiste : *Workers Autonomy - Strikes in China* [2011, 48pp] ;

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- Anton Pannekoek : *Tactical Differences in the Workers Movement* , reprinted in Serge Bricianer , : *Pannekoek and Workers Councils* [1978 USA, 306 pp],
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- Print Workers Support group : *Picket*, bound copies of Wapping strike bulletin [1986 , 110pp] ; <http://libcom.org/history/picket-bulletin-wapping-printers-strike-1986-1987>
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- Abel Paz (Diego Comacho) : *Durruti - the people armed* [1976 Canada, 323 pp];
- Walter Rose. *Good Neighbours - some recollections of an English village and its people [published 1942, 139 pages] looks at Haddenham, in Buckinghamshire ;*
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- John Reed : *Ten Days That Shook The World* [1966,350pp] account of 1917 in Russia ;
- Peter Rowlands : *Hounslow Trades union Council 1966-1991 - a brief history* [1993, 40pp] ;
- D A Smart : *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism* [1978, 176pp]
- A. R Schoyen : *The Chartist Challenge - a portrait of George Julian Harney* [1958, 300pp] ; possible link to family history ?;
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- Solidarity pamphlets on *Ceylon ; the JVP Uprising* [number 42, 1972, 50pp] and on *Vietnam* by Bob Potter [number 43, 1973, 35pp] perhaps the most cogent statement of the anti Leninist viewpoint is in *Third Worldism or Socialism*,
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- Vic Seadon : in *Fragments* Woodward HTUC [1999, 120pp.]
- Seattle Strike Committee (Root and Branch , editors): *The Seattle General Strike - an account of what happened in Seattle and especially in the labor movement , during the general strike February 6 to 11 , 1919*[1972 USA, 75 pp] R&B pamphlet 5, see also Peter Rachleff ;
- Njami Simon : *Coffin & Co.* [1985, 195pp] ;
- John Steinbeck : *In Dubious Battle* [1978, 250pp] strike organisers in 30's USA., minor masterpiece
- Maj Sjewall and Per Wahloo : *The Terrorists* [1975, 324pp] and other books in Scandinavian political crime series ;
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- Stan Weir ; *'Singejack Solidarity* [2004 USA, 384pp] ;
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- Harry Wicks : *Keeping My Head*, [1992, 226pp] subtitled *Memoirs of a British Bolshevik*. Ends in 1946 but has comprehensive Biographical notes Name list and Index
- David Widgery, *The Left in Britain 1956 -68* [1976, 549pp] essential reading ;
- Dave Widgery : *Beating Time*. [1986, 128pp] ;
- Chris and Sue Williams : *Cancer - a guide for patients and their families* , [1986, 341pp].
- Ted Willis : *Whatever happened to Tom Mix ? the story of one of my lives* [1970, 197pp] Tottenham based events in inter war Young Socialists ;
- Alan Woodward , ed. : *Fragments* HTUC , [three volumes published in 1999, 2000, and 2001, content 120pp, 54 pp and 47 pp, respectively] a Haringey Trades Union Council Local History book.
- Alan Woodward: *Party Over Class ; how Leninism has subverted workers council organisation* [2002 - second revised edition, 77pp] ; short guide to fortunes of socialist libertarianism in 1920s
- Alan Woodward : *The Miners Strike , some literature* [2004 , 31 pp]
- Alan Woodward *The New World , perspectives on workers control in revolutionary Spain 1936-39* [2011, 84 pp] ;
- Alan Woodward : *The Deeper Meaning of the Struggle - an outline history of the international shop stewards movement and socialism* [2009, 64 pp], much needed perspective on workplace organisation and its politics .
- Alan Woodward : *Laundries for the People* [1967 ?? pp];.
- Alan Woodward ; *GEC Workers Fight Back* [1977, 24 pp] ;
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- Reg Wright : *The Coventry Gang System* in Anarchy journal [,1960 ?, 8pp] or Rayton Dwight ; *Shop Floor Democracy in Action* [1972, 31pp] longer version of Wright - also probably a pen name - of Coventry shop stewards in control of car and engineering factories, based on the 'butty' system .
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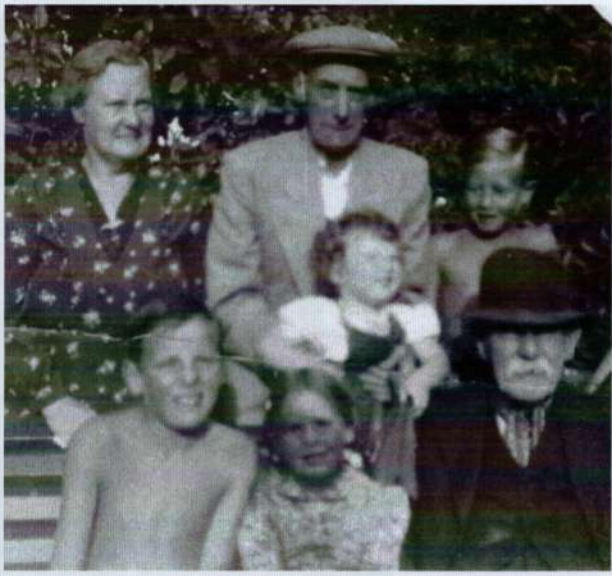
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Joe
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iv



1 - The
 Therfield
 nr. Royston
 Herts
 12.12.45

page Father Christmas
 v what kind of
 weather do you want
 this year - do you want snow
 for your sledges and toboggans
 do you want to us you people
 I hope it will not be foggy
 because there are several things
 I should like. I
 would like
 a fox and a set of soldiers
 and a gun.
 from Mrs Woodford

v



vi



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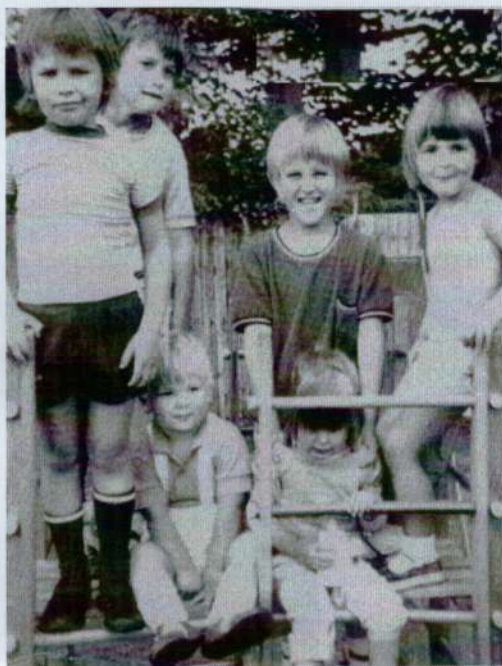


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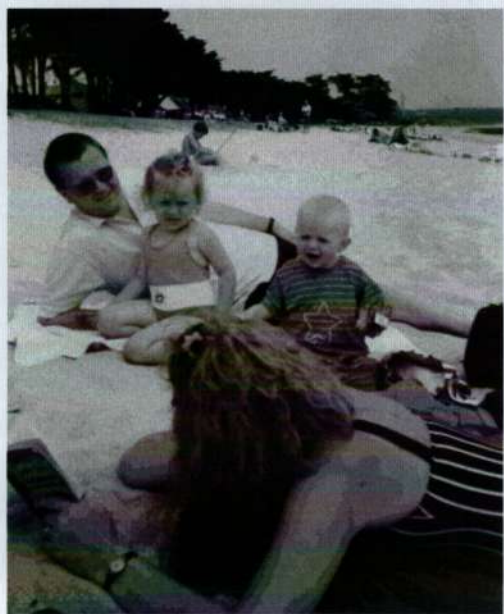


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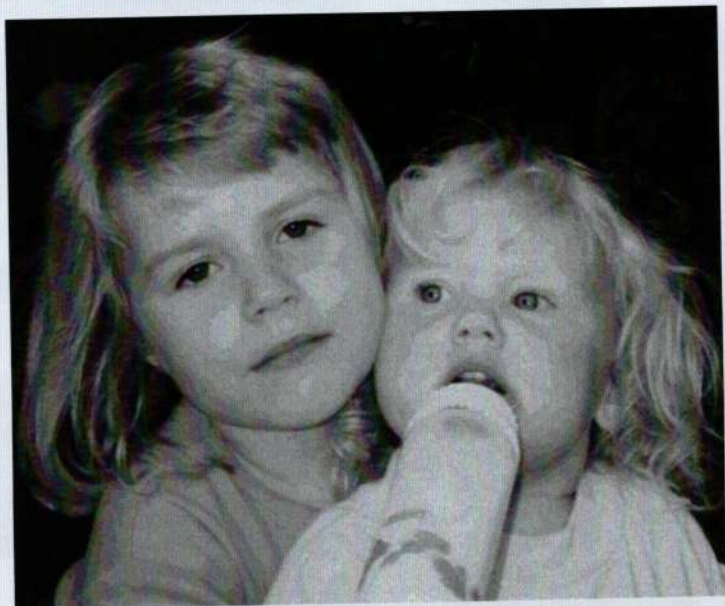


SHELL ISLAND

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Poor Boy's Tale

